
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE
AUGUST 1983
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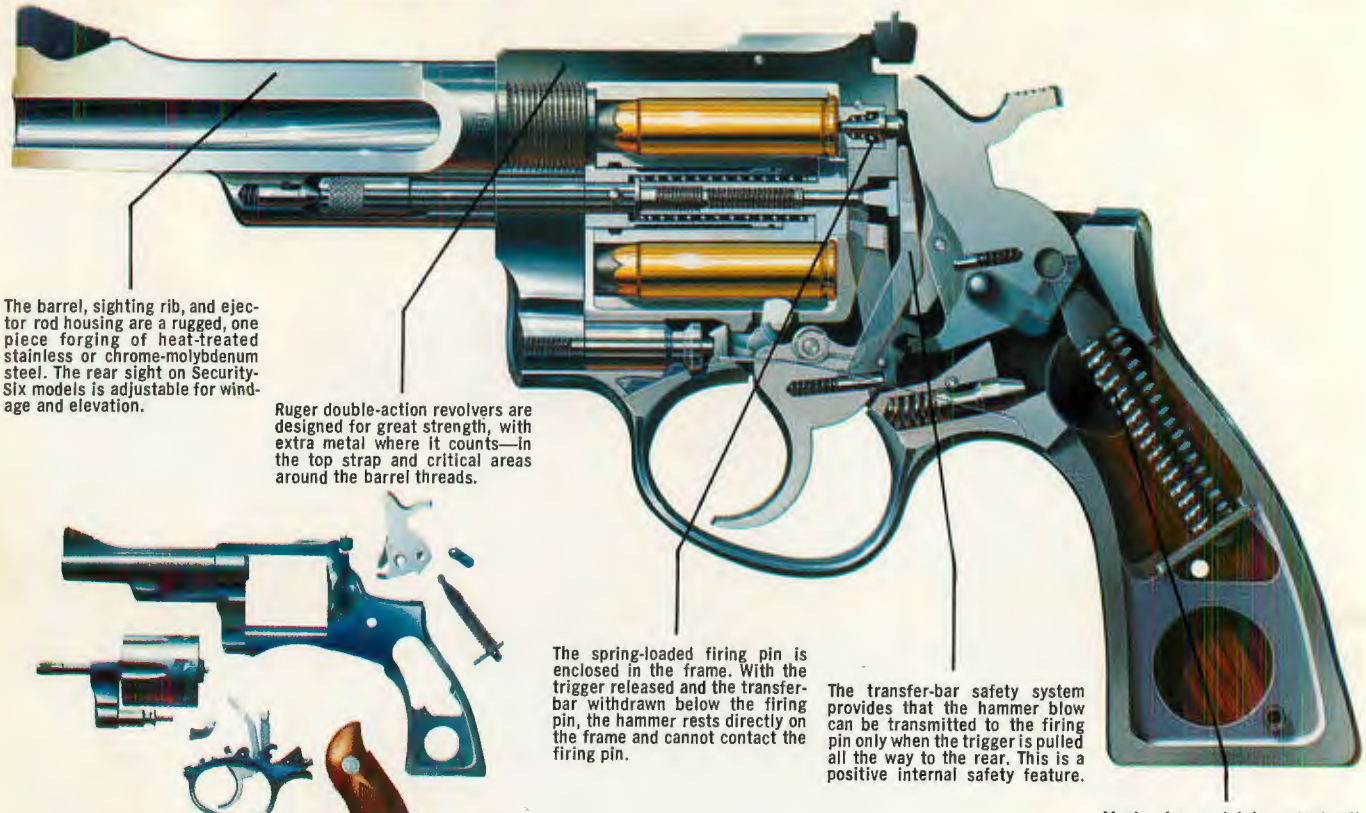
RUGER® DOUBLE-ACTION REVOLVERS



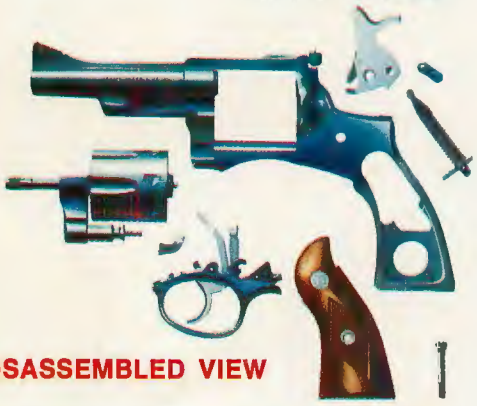
The barrel, sighting rib, and ejector rod housing are a rugged, one piece forging of heat-treated stainless or chrome-molybdenum steel. The rear sight on Security-Six models is adjustable for windage and elevation.

Ruger double-action revolvers are designed for great strength, with extra metal where it counts—in the top strap and critical areas around the barrel threads.

The spring-loaded firing pin is enclosed in the frame. With the trigger released and the transfer-bar withdrawn below the firing pin, the hammer rests directly on the frame and cannot contact the firing pin.

The transfer-bar safety system provides that the hammer blow can be transmitted to the firing pin only when the trigger is pulled all the way to the rear. This is a positive internal safety feature.

Music wire or stainless steel coil springs are used throughout the Ruger double-action revolvers.



DISASSEMBLED VIEW

Ruger double-action revolvers have been expressly designed to handle the powerful .357 Magnum cartridge, and are also perfectly matched to the .38 Special and 9mm Parabellum cartridges. Where our competitors have had to enlarge their revolvers, our compact design handles Magnum loads without excessive weight. They have the structural strength to withstand the firing of many thousands of service rounds under the most rugged conditions, providing the user with an unprecedented degree of reliability and durability—proven repeatedly by test!

The Ruger double-action revolver breaks down into subassemblies in seconds without tools. The working parts are installed through the top and bottom of the solid side-wall frame. In this way we avoid the use of a removable side-plate which would weaken the frame. Furthermore, our frame is constructed with heat-treated chrome-molybdenum or stainless steel alloy with extra metal where it counts: in the top strap and critical areas around the barrel threads. Most of the small internal parts of Ruger double-action revolvers are made of stainless steel, even in standard blued models.

Ruger double-action revolvers are accurate, with smooth trigger pulls, and are handsomely finished to reflect the precision that is built into them in every way. See the Ruger double-action revolvers at your Ruger Dealer or write to us for a free color catalog of the entire line of fine Ruger sporting firearms.

SECURITY-SIX® REVOLVERS

Model	Caliber	Catalog Number	Barrel	Sights	Finish
117	357 Mag	RDA-32	2¾″	Adj	Blued
117	357 Mag	RDA-34-H*	4″	Adj	Blued
117	357 Mag	RDA-34-H*-T†	4″	Adj	Blued
117	357 Mag	RDA-36	6″	Adj	Blued
117	357 Mag	RDA-36-T†	6″	Adj	Blued
717	357 Mag	GA-32	2¾″	Adj	Stainless
717	357 Mag	GA-34-H*	4″	Adj	Stainless
717	357 Mag	GA-34-H*-T†	4″	Adj	Stainless
717	357 Mag	GA-36	6″	Adj	Stainless
717	357 Mag	GA-36-T†	6″	Adj	Stainless

POLICE SERVICE-SIX® REVOLVERS

Model	Caliber	Catalog Number	Barrel	Sights	Finish
107	357 Mag	SDA-32	2¾″	Fixed	Blued
107	357 Mag	SDA-34	4″	Fixed	Blued
108	38 Spl	SDA-84	4″	Fixed	Blued
109	9mm	SDA-94	4″	Fixed	Blued
707	357 Mag	GF-34	4″	Fixed	Stainless
708	38 Spl	GF-84	4″	Fixed	Stainless

SPEED-SIX® REVOLVERS

Model	Caliber	Catalog Number	Barrel	Sights	Finish
207	357 Mag	SS-32	2¾″	Fixed	Blued
207	357 Mag	SS-34	4″	Fixed	Blued
208	38 Spl	SS-82	2¾″	Fixed	Blued
209	9mm	SS-92	2¾″	Fixed	Blued
209	9mm	SS-94	4″	Fixed	Blued
737	357 Mag	GS-32	2¾″	Fixed	Stainless
737	357 Mag	GS-34	4″	Fixed	Stainless
738	38 Spl	GS-82	2¾″	Fixed	Stainless
739	9mm	GS-92	2¾″	Fixed	Stainless

*Heavy Barrel
†Target Grips, White Outline Rear Sight, Red Ramp Front Sight

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EDITOR'S NOTE
THE WAR ON OUR DOORSTEP

SINCE *Soldier Of Fortune* prides itself on marching toward the sound of guns, no one should be surprised to learn that we've been in Central America in strength of late.

After all, the war against Marxist guerrillas has moved one giant step in our direction with the current round of fighting in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, and the internal threats in Honduras and Costa Rica.

It does make things difficult to have so many of our editors in the bush at one time, however. Publisher Robert K. Brown, Military Small Arms Editor Pete Kokalis and Special Projects Director Alex McColl just returned from El Salvador, while Contributing Editor Jay Mallin and Executive Editor Bob Poos are back from Honduras.

Brown, Kokalis, McColl and three other SOF staffers were in El Salvador to go on an operation with the Salvadoran Airborne Battalion, to evaluate progress of the struggle there and assess the overall situation. Poos was covering the Contra activity in Honduras and took a close look at the plight of the Miskito Indians, forced out of Nicaragua by the Sandinistas. Mallin, who has kept his hand in Central American affairs since the 1960s and has made several trips there since December, has been pursuing the Cuban connection in Honduras and other countries.

Is El Salvador another Vietnam? Who are the Contras? Who's behind them and what are their goals? How effective are they?

We won't go so far as to say we have all the answers, but we've got some ideas based on first-hand investigation and observation and you'll find them in our September issue. Because we had so many timely articles on the Central American war, we're expanding the magazine again — to 116 pages.

Because of the additional 16 pages of color coverage of the Central American scene, the newsstand price will be $3.50 — but subscribers will get it as part of their 12-issue package at no extra cost.

Since our December special was so well-received, we anticipate that this one will be too. If it's a success, we plan to do more expanded issues in the future — an extra bonus to you for subscribing to SOF.

Whatever, don't miss our September issue.

— Jim Graves

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SOF

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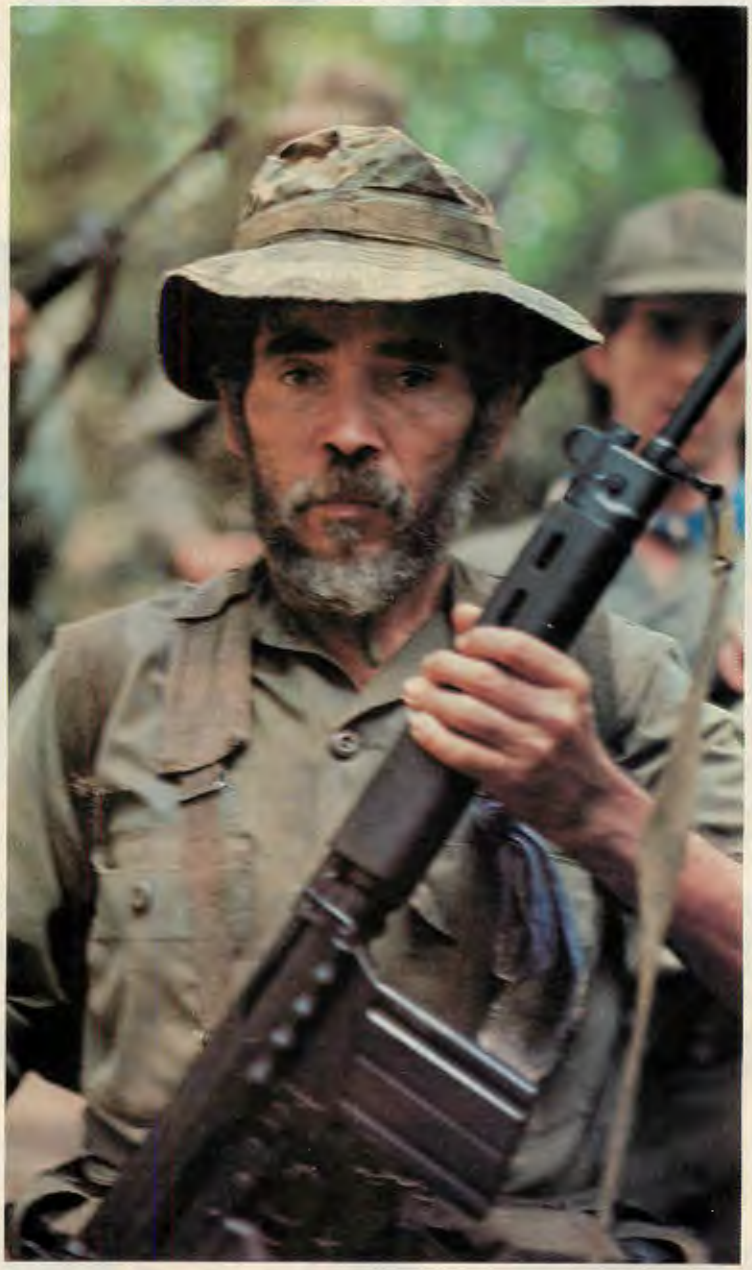

Page 48

COVER: SOF's Jay Mallin examines how Costa Rica is faring in Castro's Central American war and Jim Coyne joins Nicaraguan Contras in secret Costa Rican training camp to observe preparations for "The Offensive" against Sandanistan government. Read articles beginning on page 48.
Photo: Jim Coyne

Photo courtesy of U.S. Marine Corps

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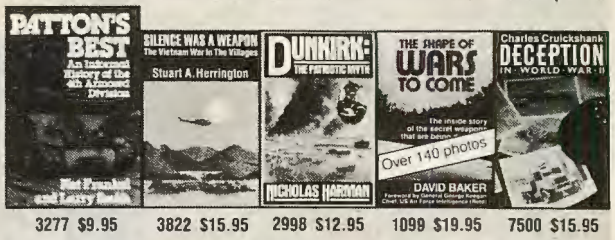

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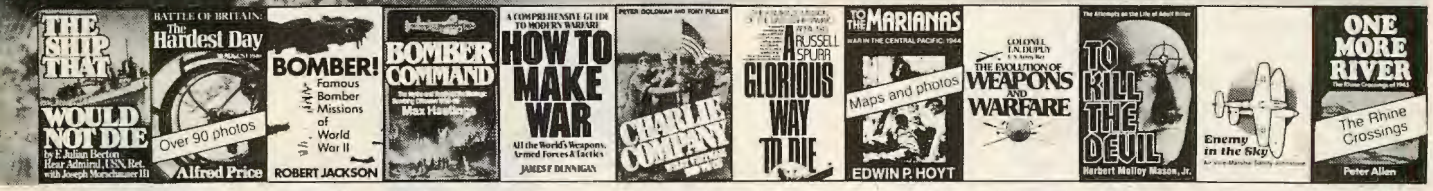

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FLAK

WARNING FROM AN EYEWITNESS...

Sirs:

During the '75 pullout from Vietnam, a fellow corpsman and myself were sent emergency TDY in May to assist with "Operation New Life," and assigned to Wake Island. Our function was to provide emergency medical assistance to the field medical unit from Clark Air Base, in the Philippines. They were receiving refugee groups from other staging areas throughout the Far East.

Our initial days on station were bedlam to say the least. The massive airlift of Vietnamese included everything from combat casualties to severe cases of ascariasis in children, and was almost overwhelming. Objectivity was extremely difficult when faced with numerous visible signs of physical, emotional and personal defeat. Countless people had been driven from their homes, some with very little personal property, some with worthless currency which was often thrown into the ocean later. Initially, we worked without valuable interpreters, but gained a few in the following days.

Those in this country who seek to avoid the destruction and ruthless path of the communist-backed insurgents throughout the world should have seen first-hand the fear, pain, anger and loss those refugees felt when they arrived, knowing that to stay behind would have been certain execution at the hands of the NVA. The American people need to see the news films never shown and read the true accounts that were either never written or thrown in some editor's wastebasket. It's been seven years since the fall and, as a country, we still don't give a damn.

As I watched the ceremony at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, I shed my first tear for my fallen brothers who served. I took a long look at the past and what I saw was a future that held those same anguished faces, and maybe closer to home this time. The real threat of international organized terrorism is here now, not on some Pentagon planning board of contingencies for the future. The origin of these events we all know, but it seems that SOF is the only member of the press that is willing to face the problems and identify them.

I hope that you will continue to show the American people that the communists don't fight fair, and that their terrorist groups around the world seek only to destroy. I realize the enormity of your undertaking and the true dedication and aggressiveness of your staff, and I salute them all.

Robert E. Porter, Sr.
Nashville, Tennessee

A LOADED QUESTION...

Sirs:

It has been eight years since I left the Army and I had almost forgotten why. But yesterday a news report reminded me: A general has just decided to let our Marines in Lebanon load their weapons.

At first I was shocked to hear that they had been carrying unloaded weapons, but then I remembered that very few of the orders I received in the military had made any sense. I wonder what would happen if the Palestinians or the Israelis wiped out a Marine company. Perhaps, in a few months, the brass would decide to let our men shoot back. But I wouldn't bet on it.

Ken Deane
Beech Grove, Indiana

Continued on page 87

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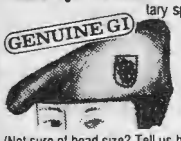

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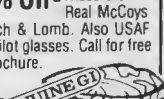

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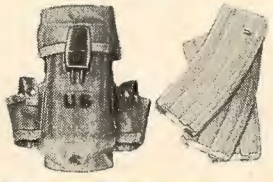

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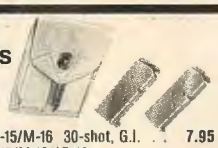

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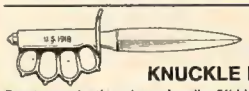

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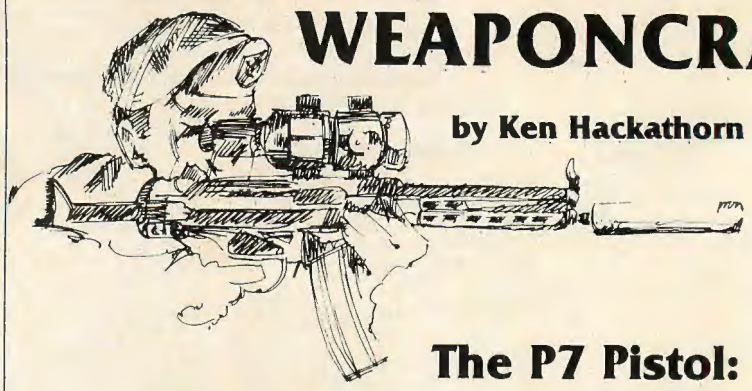

The P7 Pistol: State of the Art in Autoloaders

by Ken Hackathorn

FOR the past three years, Heckler & Koch's popular P-7 9mm Parabellum pistol has been used in a wide variety of sidearm applications. We now have a pretty fair idea of what it can do, and of its actual performance in many different situations.

When first introduced, the H&K PSP (P-7) was billed as the "answer" to defensive sidearms, and extensive tests and evaluations proved it to be outstanding indeed. After three years on the market, P-7 owners have put the pistol through its paces, and we are now getting some excellent feedback about the utility of the weapon.

Though it does have some minor faults, the P-7's design is genuinely new, not something engineered to reflect other popular service pistol features. Although its gas-retarded blowback action originates from the WWII German *Volksturm Gewehr* VG1-5, the concept is ideal for a high-pressure round like the 9mm Parabellum.

Overall, the P-7 is one of the most compact, simple, rugged service pistols made. I was one of the first purchasers of the early P-7s imported into the United States, and since then, my gun has digested more than 5,000 rounds of ammo. I have used it in many combat pistol matches and find it most reliable.

I have trained a number of students, using the P-7, and once my entire class had new P-7 autos. Having used this weapon as an instructor, I realize that the P-7 definitely requires proper training in special gun-handling techniques for effective use.

Any agency or department considering issue of the P-7 should be aware that training will have to be greater in both time and ammo expenditure if a safe, competent skill level is to be acquired — especially if the agency plans to replace its revolvers with the P-7. Once an agency inaugurates proper training and familiarization with the P-7, it will discover the overall utility of this weapon to be far greater than most current sidearms.

As far as autoloading pistols intended for defensive use are concerned, the P-7 is state-of-the-art, and in terms of reliability, safety and operator performance, it is nearly ideal. The safety issue is critical, because of today's problems of "liability." Since operator technique of the P-7 is unique, the following points must be understood.

First, although the P-7 is a very safe pistol to use, it requires more than casual refresher training. It cannot be fired unless the unique squeeze cocker is depressed. This means that one cannot have an accidental discharge unless the pistol is gripped with enough force to depress the cocker, as is most often the problem when loading or unloading automatic pistols. Most ADs take place during charging or clearing actions, and the P-7 will reduce this possibility.

The ready position of the P-7 is simple. If the pistol is squeeze-cocked, it is ready to fire. If the squeeze cocker is not depressed, the pistol is completely safe. I recommend that anytime the pistol is in hand and squeeze-cocked, the finger should remain outside the trigger guard until actual firing commences.

Another area of consideration with the P-7 is the fact that some types of 9x19mm ammunition cause more carbon deposits than others. The P-7's action does allow a fair amount of carbon to be blown into the pistol's interior. Be sure to clean the P-7 often (don't shoot more than 250 rounds without cleaning) and use a good carbon dissolving agent like Break-Free CLP. Avoid Nyclad-type ammo and lead bullets, or use them only for emergencies. The gas port in the barrel allows lead or soft jacket material to be blown into the gas cylinder, often causing drag and malfunctions. I have noticed pieces of jacket from Winchester-Western Silver Tip 9mm Parabellum in every P-7 fired with this ammo. Normal copper or steel jacket ammunition will cause no problems. I suggest sticking to full-pressure Parabellum ammo, since that is what the P-7 was designed to shoot.

The P-7's trigger pull is light and easy to master. Some spongy creep may be encountered in some specimens, but overall, the light trigger action enhances the already excellent firing characteristics. Several of my P-7-owning friends have had gunsmiths install an overtravel stop to the trigger. This modification yields more accurate shooting.

The factory sights are the popular three-dot system so many favor. I prefer to leave the front dot white and have the back sight blacked out. I also recommend adding a luminous Nite-Site to the front sight if your travels are more likely to be after dark.

The one area that has caused problems for new P-7 owners is that depressing the squeeze cocker requires a very firm grip. Many of my students unfamiliar with shooting have not de-

Continued on page 86

Lest We Forget...

VIETNAM TRIBUTE

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Ronald Reagan

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In this, the tenth anniversary year of the last American military operations in Vietnam, The American Historical Foundation pays tribute to the Americans who served our country in the struggle for the preservation of freedom in Southeast Asia.

It was a commendable crusade by a powerful nation to help a small, aspiring country win and hold a free and dignified way of life.

History—and time—will judge the Americans who served there to be the heroes of that decade. Some were volunteers, some were draftees. Most had other lives to lead. But when duty called, they served.

They can take pride in their many accomplishments. They did what the leadership of our nation asked them to do, and they did it well.

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Now, the largely unsung men and women who served—and, in a sense, the noble motivations and the American spirit that caused us to enter the conflict—are honored through the issuance of this lasting, tangible tribute.

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Authentic To Vietnam

The Gerber Mark II Combat Knife was selected because it was the most famous knife of this war. This knife first saw use in Vietnam, having been created for combat there. It quickly became the chosen knife of many men of the Green Berets of the U.S. Army Special Forces, and it was privately purchased by men in all branches of the U.S. military.

The original Vietnam-era "wasp body" blade shape—no longer produced—will be reintroduced especially for this series. This blade is hardened, tempered and sharpened by hand to a razor's edge.

But unlike any knife ever made prior to this, this limited edition tribute has been given distinctive embellishments designed with the assistance of U.S. Army combat veterans of Vietnam.

The hilt is produced in the four colors of the Vietnam-era, woodland leaf-pattern camouflage developed by the U.S. Army for jungle fighting. A gold-plated, fired enamel cloisonne medallion of the U.S. Army insignia forms the focal point of the grip.

The combat scene etched on the mirror-polished steel blade permanently records American troops making an airmobile assault on the enemy—a tactical innovation developed in Vietnam.

Riflemen with their M-16s jump from Huey "Slicks," while in the foreground M-60 machine gunners, riflemen and a radioman move out to secure the hot LZ (landing zone under enemy fire). You can almost hear the "whump-whump-whump" of the choppers' blades overhead, the cracking of M-16 fire, the staccato of the M-60s and, in the background, the thud of mortar fire and the enemy's Russian-made AK-47s.

On the blade shoulder is etched the insignia of the U.S. Army—Vietnam, representative of all Army units that served in Southeast Asia. *Or, if you prefer, the unit insignia of your choice can be etched in this position.*

Booklet by General Westmoreland

As an important reminder to present and future generations of the significant sacrifices made by Americans who served in Southeast Asia, you will also receive a copy of "Vietnam Tribute." This was written by General William Westmoreland, former commander of all U.S. military forces in Vietnam; it is being published by the Foundation as part of this project.

To display and preserve your U.S. Army—Vietnam Tribute Combat Knife, you will receive a specially designed, furniture-finished solid mahogany case of military design, with olive drab Certificate of Authenticity, recessed and fitted into the inner lid.

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You will also be made a member of The American Historical Foundation, with members in 27 countries, and receive, at no expense, hard to obtain information concerning military history and the history, care, display and collecting of knives, swords, and militaria.

Whether or not you or a member of your family served in Vietnam, this tribute will give you a renewed sense of pride in the Americans who answered the call to duty in the defense of freedom in Southeast Asia. Contributions will also be made by the Foundation to Vietnam veterans associations, to help them to continue to perpetuate the memory of the Americans honored by this tribute.

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This is available only through The American Historical Foundation. You may write, call, personally visit or use the reservation form below. Reservations will be acknowledged immediately. Write or call about having your name, service number, dates, etc. etched on the blade reverse. You may send a deposit or payment in full. You may inspect your knife for a full 30 days prior to deciding to keep it. Satisfaction is guaranteed.

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IN REVIEW

THE UNKNOWN BATTLE: METZ, 1944. By Anthony Kemp. New York: Stein & Day. 1980. For sale from Military Book Club, Dept. SOF, GR-155, Garden City, NY 11530. 250 pp. 10 maps, 15 photos, five diagrams, appendices and bibliography. $10.95. Review by Bill Brooks.

ANTHONY Kemp, a distinguished expert in the field of military architecture and fortifications (founder and chairman of the International Fortress Study Group), has written a very good book dealing with three interrelated and controversial subjects: the strategy and tactics of the Metz campaign, the "great argument" between Patton and Montgomery over priority of supplies and the military value of stationary fortifications.

In the late summer of 1944, Gen. George Patton's Third Army was positioned before the Moselle and the Lorraine Plateau, poised to pursue the retreating Germans into the Saar and back to the Rhine and the West Wall. But Patton's tanks were out of fuel and his line of supply was a tenuous strip across the broad plains of central France.

Although Patton hinted to his subordinates that there was a conspiracy to rob him of his chance to "end the war in '44," as the author explains, it was Montgomery's abortive operation to take the Rhine bridges which received priority, and Patton was condemned to sit on the sidelines, waging a kind of war for which he had neither the talent nor the inclination.

Securing a bridgehead over the Moselle and occupying the city of Metz meant capturing a series of fortresses that were impervious to heavy artillery and air bombardment. These fortresses, built nearly half a century earlier, enabled a weak but gallant German force to resist, and, for a time, stop Patton's Third Army. The Battle of Metz was the last time in the history of modern warfare when supposedly outdated fortresses played a decisive role against a mechanized army.

The Metz campaign became a battle fought chiefly by infantrymen, artillerymen and engineers. Both sides struggled with inadequate supplies, a lack of reserves and bad weather. Rain limited air support, hindered bridge construction and created a sea of mud which prevented operations by American armor. German armor was almost nonexistent but their "attack" infantry was stiffened by the presence of crack troops from the Metz military schools. Had the Germans been able to hold out three weeks longer, Patton would have been unable to respond flexibly to the threat posed by the Ardennes offensive.

In the case of Metz, Hitler's doctrine of holding on to territory at all costs imposed a valuable check on the Allies and won a temporary Nazi propaganda victory, save for the loss of some weak garrison units. (The military school units were withdrawn before Metz became surrounded.)

The Unknown Battle was fought without benefit of today's unlimited supplies of ice cream and beer, in appalling conditions and against a cunning, courageous enemy. Whether or not the battle should have been fought at all is a matter of opinion — it is the tactical direction of the fighting which the author criticizes. The reluctance of those in command, Bradley and Patton, to face up to the fact that the tactical situation had changed in September 1944 was a grave error. Many lives were senselessly wasted in futile attacks on fortified positions. With a little more reconnaissance and thought, many American casualties could have been avoided.

Metz was not an episode of which those responsible for the direction of the campaign could be particularly proud. The glory was won by junior officers and enlisted men on both sides. Metz was a classic example of the horrible face of war. Shivering in foxholes, drunk with fatigue, hounded by torrential rains and incessant artillery, the German and American infantrymen reverted to their primeval role as one-man fighting units. It is their exploits that Anthony Kemp wishes readers to remember.

The author has included two appendices, one on the development of Metz as a fortress and the other on the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, which evaluated the effects of the American bombing upon the Metz forts.

Colorfully written and loaded with firsthand accounts, I found Kemp's work lacking only in photographs: None of the principle personalities or enemy military units involved in the campaign are pictured in the book.

Anthony Kemp has written a fine account of a campaign too long forgotten.

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL DIRECTORY OF NAMES. Published by Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc., Washington, D.C. November 1982. 763 pp. Softcover. $15.00. Review by Bill Brooks.

BETWEEN 8 July 1959 and 15 May 1975 nearly 58,000 Americans died in Southeast Asia. This is an alphabetical index of their names as inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The directory provides the exact location of each name as well as additional identifying information about each person, i.e., date and place of birth, date of death and branch of service. In keeping with the spirit of the memorial itself, this index is dedicated to honor the courage, sacrifice and devotion to duty of all who answered their country's call and paid the extreme sacrifice. You won't study this with a dry eye.

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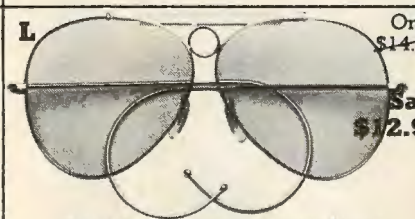

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ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER

by John Metzger

TOMMY GUN REPLICA...

The *American Historical Foundation* and *Auto Ordnance Corp.* have created a special, limited edition "World War II Commemorative Thompson" to commemorate the now-legendary role the Thompson submachine gun has played in U.S. military history. Only 750 will be made. The solid walnut stocks are genuine GI war-time production. The .45-cal. Thompson (available in semi-automatic, and full auto for qualified buyers) is finished and engraved in beautiful detail. The polished trigger, sights, Cutts compensator, swivels and ribbed activator knob are enhanced with 24-karat gold. The optional display cabinet is solid walnut with acrylic cover. Retail price is $995. For further information contact *The American Historical Foundation*, Dept. SOF, 1022 W. Franklin St., Richmond, VA 23220. Phone: (804) 353-1812.

CAMMIE RIGS...

A new line of camouflage holsters, slings, belts and pouches are available from *Tex Shoemaker & Sons, Inc.* SOF Contributing Editor Ken Hackathorn is shown at '83 Dallas S.H.O.T. (Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade) Show with leaf-patterned Uniform Swivel Holster for Colt's .45 Auto. It retails for $43.50. All products are constructed of durable woven nylon adhered to leather. For more information contact *Tex Shoemaker & Sons, Inc.*, Dept. SOF, 714 West Cienega Ave., San Dimas, CA 91773. Phone: (714) 599-3319.

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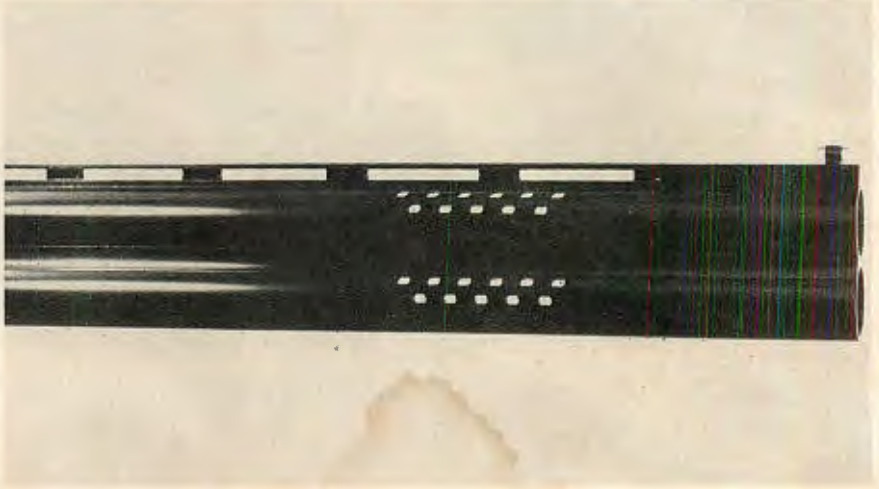

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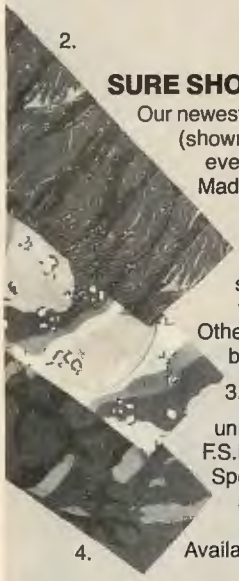

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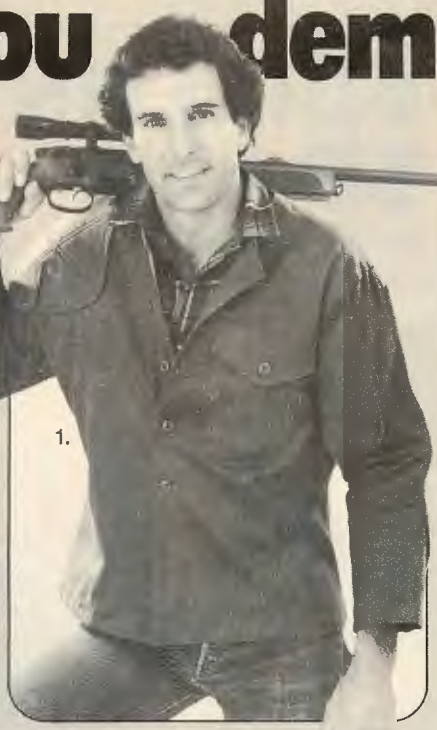

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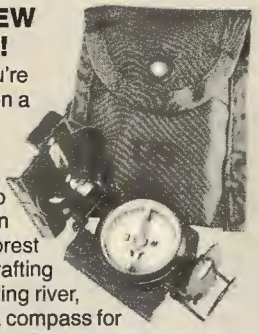

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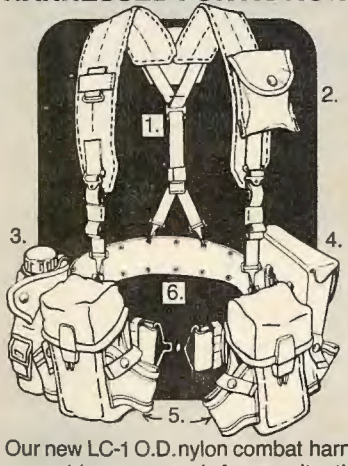

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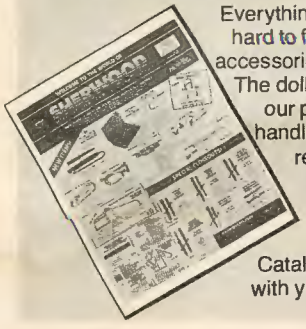

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BULLETIN BOARD

by Donna DuVall

BEAR TRUTH ABOUT ANDROPOV...

Describing Soviet Premier Yuri Andropov as the most ruthless, cunning leader since Genghis Khan and Joseph Stalin, former head of Allied intelligence during WWII, Sir William Stephenson, showed that he is not fooled by the *New York Times*-originated theory that Andropov is a closet liberal.

"Andropov is the sole dictator of the Soviet Union" and is only interested in expanding the Soviet empire, asserted the former intelligence chief, who is slated to receive the Gen. William J. Donovan award from the U.S. government later this year for his intelligence work during WWII.

Stephenson admonished the United States to continue to improve and rely upon its intelligence sources to defend against Russian aggression. "The world is fortunate in having in the United States the most important, effective, knowledgeable, visceral...leaders, Pres. Ronald Reagan and Vice-President George Bush," he added.

SALVADORAN MEDICAL NEEDS...

Just returned from an on-site inspection of El Salvador's woefully inadequate medical facilities, Robert K. Brown and Dr. John Peters report that medically the war is going very badly for the Salvadorans, who lack even the most rudimentary equipment and supplies. The following items, which should be in serviceable but not necessarily new condition, are desperately needed for hospital and field use:

- **MAST trousers (medical anti-shock)**
- **McSwain Dart with Heimlich valve chest tubes**
- **pressure dressings**
- **IV fluids and attachments (normal saline and Ringer's Lactate)**
- **anesthesia machines**
- **ventilator/respirators**
- **miscellaneous surgical equipment (scissors, retractors, scalpels, gloves, etc.)**
- ***white* bedsheets and pillowcases**
- **cardiac monitors**
- **plaster and padding for casts**
- **dressings, bandages, syringes**
- **colostomy sets and bags**
- **x-ray film**
- **Foley catheters (no. 12, 14, 16 and 20)**
- **splints (pneumatic)**
- **CVP lines**
- **dermatromes with blade supplies**
- **angiography and myelogram dyes**
- **subclavian catheters**

SOF's Explosives/Demolitions Editor, John Donovan, teaches Salvadorans basic demolitions. September's special 116-page SOF will include full report on El Salvador. Photo: Robert K. Brown

In addition, several mobile mini-hospital/clinics are required. Although expensive, they are invaluable in the treatment of civilians.

From 1979 to 1982, the number of surgical procedures performed in the only two operating rooms of the military hospital in San Salvador have risen fourfold. Needed surgical skills are present with a pool of 12 military and 900 part-time civilian physicians encompassing all specialities. These medical advances are hindered by the lack of equipment and supplies, but despite the critical shortages, an approximate 94-percent recovery rate has been achieved at the hospital — in large part because of a dedicated, capable staff.

Civilians and military personnel will benefit from your donations.

Contributions can be sent to El Salvador Medical Project, *Soldier of Fortune*, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306. As soon as a sizable equipment supply is accumulated, an SOF medical representative will accompany the shipment to its final destination.

CHINESE FLIER OF FORTUNE...

Chinese pilot Wu Yung-Ken learned that crime does pay — especially if you defect in a stolen People's Republic of China (PRC) fighter-jet to Taiwan. For delivering the MiG-19 fighter, Wu was paid $2 million in gold.

In addition to the $2 million, which the Taiwan government has forbidden him to donate to charity to avoid rumors that he was forced to do so, Wu also received a healthy increase in salary. As a 26-year-old captain in the PRC Army, he received $37 a month; as a major in the Nationalist Chinese Army, he earns $700 per month.

The pay differential is not the only monetary discrepancy between the two Chinese governments. Both offer rewards for defectors who deliver planes, but the Red Chinese offer only $350,000 — a $1,650,000 difference.

To escape from his northeastern base camp, Wu had to fly over South Korean air space. The South Koreans intercepted and debriefed him before allowing him to continue to Taiwan.

Wu's greatest concerns now are the safety of his family still in mainland China and how to spend $2 millon dollars.

AFGHAN FREEDOM FIGHTERS FUND...

With both sadness and gratitude, *Soldier of Fortune* recently received a contribution of $303.48 to the Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund from the family of John W. Stevens. Although SOF is always grateful for funds to pass along to the brave Afghans, the fact that this generous contribution came from the parents of a young man, 20 years old, who had just taken his own life, saddened us.

In a poignant letter, his father, C.J. Stevens, expressed John's wish to leave part of his estate to the Afghan fund. "In a long and thoughtful statement, written immediately before his suicide, John expressed his wishes as to where his money and belongings were to be distributed. 'To the Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund (care of *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine), I leave five percent of all my financial assets.'"

Even more appreciated than the material value of the money is the spirit of dedication to freedom, even in a far country, which it represents. This generous donation will be applied in John Stevens' name and memory where it can have the maximum effect toward freeing the Afghan people from Soviet oppression.

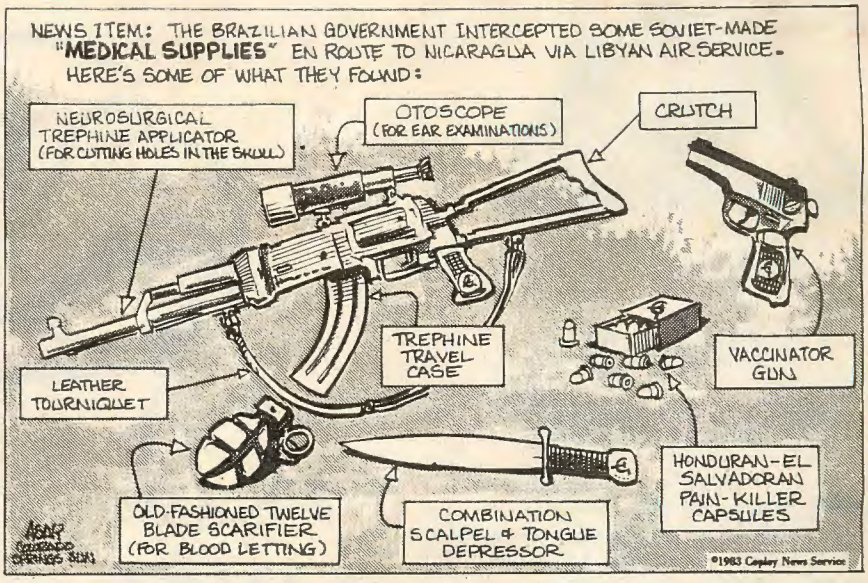
MORE PREVENTIVE MEDICINE...

SOF doesn't subscribe to the same medical labeling system as the Libyans do, but that doesn't mean that on their recent medical reconnaissance trip Brown & Co. didn't notice how the war was going on the other fronts. Here too, they observed the lack of rudimentary maintenance items.

As part of SOF's "preventive medicine" aid program (to prevent soldiers from being injured), the following items are urgently needed for the airborne battalion and other combat units of the Salvadoran Army:

1. Weapons maintenance equipment: cleaning rods, bore brushes and other cleaning materials for M16 rifles, M60 machine guns and M2 HB .50-caliber machine guns.

2. Field gear: military flashlights, canteens, military binoculars, ammunition pouches for 30-round M16 magazines, lensatic compasses and K-bar or similar field knives.



3. Parachute maintenance items: sewing-machine needles, packing paddles, patching material, ripstop tape, deployment-bag hesitator loops, aluminum rivets for Capewell kits, hot knives, seam rippers, packing hoops, static lines and snap fasteners.

Donations should be sent to El Salvador Defense Fund, *Soldier of Fortune*, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306.

SAS FILM OPENS IN U.S....

For those of you who have been anxiously awaiting the U.S. release of the smash British film about the SAS, *Who Dares Wins*, I have encouraging news. According to *Washington Inquirer* sources, the film will be released in the United States this fall under the title, *The Final Option*. The brilliant film, which has gotten excellent reviews in Europe, concerns the battles of the British elite anti-terrorist SAS unit against communist-inspired terrorism, much of which is done under the guise of the peace movements in Europe. Sounds like a film that SOFers will want to watch for.

SOF ART DIRECTOR PRAISED...

Soldier of Fortune Art Director Craig Nunn received the following letter from the Boulder County Sheriff's Department:

"On 19 March 1983, one of my officers was attempting to subdue a party at the Bustop Bar. That officer later learned that perhaps this Department owes you a letter of thanks. Employees of the Bustop indicated that while the fight was taking place, a party armed with a beer bottle appeared out of the crowd and was going to strike my officer with the bottle. You interceded, perhaps saving the officer from serious injury. At the time of the incident, we had no idea this happened.

"In a free country such as ours, freedom with law and order depends upon cooperation between citizens and the police. Your intervention exemplifies this spirit of cooperation and we thank you for your help."

Art Director Nunn is not the first SOF staffer to be so honored. In October '77, Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown and his assistant, Tom Reisinger, were presented a Distinguished Citizen Award by the Boulder Municipal Police Department for assisting in the apprehension of a man who, while high on PCP, had stabbed a woman in the SOF parking lot.

But Craig, what were you doing at the Bustop (Boulder's famous topless bar)?

SOUTH AFRICAN PLAN FOR NAMIBIA...

Reliable sources in Pretoria report that South Africa has a new plan for independence for Namibia, formerly South West Africa. Western political analysts see little hope of this plan being accepted, however.

Preliminary reports indicate that South Africa wants to separate the northern section from Namibia and give it to Jonas Savimbi, leader of the UNITA faction in southeastern Angola, which directly borders northern Namibia. Savimbi could then turn the severed territory into a buffer state between Angola and Namibia, or add it to his proposed "Federation to Angolan States."

South Africa's intentions are twofold. By removing the Ovambo and Caprivi- Kavango sections from Namibia, the whites in the remainder of the country would dominate and could rule

Continued on page 90

PMRS TRAINING

Albuquerque Parachute Center (APC) of Albuquerque, New Mexico, has agreed to provide a special airborne training course for **Parachute Medical Rescue Service (PMRS)** Emergency Volunteers at Albuquerque 9-11 September 1983 (the weekend after Labor Day). The course will consist of complete prejump training and one jump. For experienced jumpers there will be instructions on rigging bundles for airdrop, setting up drop zones and receiving of air drops in underdeveloped countries. **PMRS** Emergency Volunteers who successfully complete the course will receive PMRS/APC First Jump Certificates and log books.

The package includes lodging the nights of 9 and 10 September and meals from Friday night through Sunday breakfast, including the "propblast" banquet Saturday evening. Transportation to and from Albuquerque is your responsibility. The fee is $185.00 per person.

PMRS Emergency Volunteers desiring to enroll in this course should call or write Alex McColl, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, Colorado 80306, (303) 449-3750. If you are not an enrolled **PMRS** Emergency Volunteer, but would like to enroll, please get in touch.

PMRS is an all-volunteer, nongovernmental, non-profit disaster-relief organization whose President is Robert K. Brown, Editor and Publisher of *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine. Albuquerque Parachute Center is headed by John Early, formerly of the U.S. Army Special Forces and the Rhodesian Selous Scouts. He is one of America's foremost professional parachutists and parachute instructors.

NOTE: Applications must be received, with payment, not later than 15 August 1983.

Applications received after this date will be returned.

I WAS THERE

Airborne Nut

by M.E. Anderson
As told to M.L. Jones

In 1958, during the early years of his Army career, M.E. Anderson was assigned as supply clerk to the 3rd U.S. Army Airborne Field Augmentation Detachment — then the official title of the 101st Airborne Division Jump School, Ft. Campbell, Ky. As he tells it:

IT was a pretty soft job, no ground-pounding, regular hours — and all of the jumps that I cared to make. My duties included keeping the training equipment and supplies shaped up — and processing all accident and injury reports regarding our potential troopers. I was stuck with this job because I was (and still am) a marginal typist.

I had to interview those who had gotten various breaks, sprains and assorted physical damage during training. Out of the hundreds that I processed, all were routine jump-related casualties — except one. As I was canvassing injured students, I came upon a young private lying in his hospital bed with what looked like a red basketball between his legs. Not so: It was one of his testicles!

His doctor told me he had broken some blood vessels in his groin on his first jump, and his testicle was infused with blood, swelling it to terrible size.

The young soldier tearfully informed me that he was taught to pull his leg straps *tight;* they'd been so tight he'd had trouble walking to the C-123. Somehow, the mild opening shock of the T-10 did the damage.

I made a swift, horrified retrograde from his bed, repelled not so much by his gross condition, but by his continuing apologies for being such a stupid screw-up, his failure at becoming a trooper and his shame at facing the near future as a "leg." I filled out the report, filed it and tried to forget it.

I was shocked some weeks later to learn that this troop had gotten his wings. After the surgeons finally removed the ruined gonad, he healed up and returned to jump school, making his required jumps with no further problems.

I have, over the years, seen acts of bravery, courage and heroism. However, I've never been able to forget that kid who actually gave his left nut to be Airborne.

IF you have a personal adventure for "It Happened to Me" or "I Was There," triple-space type it and send it to SOF, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306, Attn: M.L. Jones. All stories should be 500 words or less. Upon publication, SOF will become owner of all publication rights. Submitted articles are subject to editing and revision, although their content and theme will not be changed.

Photos (with captions and credits) are also helpful. Captions should be typed on a separate sheet of paper and keyed to each photograph.

Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope so we can notify you of acceptance or return your story. Article payment is $50, upon publication. All entrants will receive an SOF patch.

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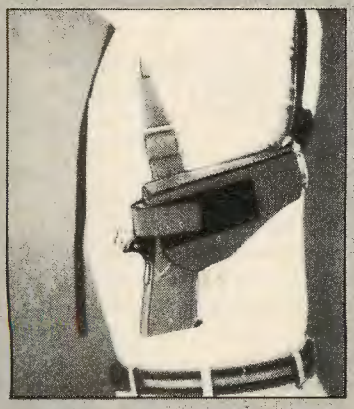

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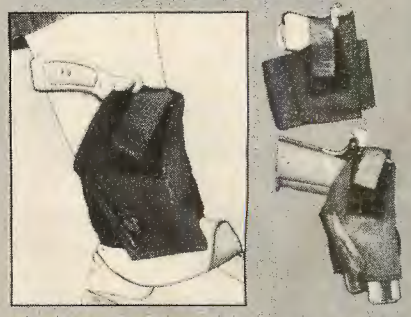

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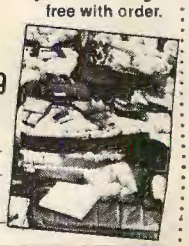

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FULL AUTO

The AR10: The Battle Rifle That Never Was

by Peter G. Kokalis

IN 1956 the Armalite Division of Fairchild Engine and Airplane Corp., with former Marine Eugene Stoner as its chief engineer, introduced the 7.62mm NATO AR10 into the fierce competition then raging between the FN FAL and what was to become the M14. The AR10 combined many advanced features into a thoroughly modern rifle fabricated largely of aluminum alloys and plastics. The few steel parts, such as the bolt and bolt carrier, were chrome-plated, making the entire rifle nearly impervious to rust. The stock was of straight-line design to counteract muzzle climb and was constructed of a fiberglass-reinforced plastic shell filled with rigid foam to increase its strength.

The final prototype submitted to the U.S. Army for trial at the end of 1956 had an aluminum barrel with a stainless steel liner and was fitted with an odd canister muzzle brake and flash suppressor which reduced recoil almost 40 percent and eliminated flash.

Unfortunately, Armalite had not deliberately induced overheating in preliminary testing. During the burst-fire portion of the Army trials, the perforated ''tomato-can'' muzzle device disintegrated and repeated hammering of the barrel liner caused it and the barrel to split wide open. This immediately knocked the AR10 out of contention, and caused ecstasy among the U.S. Army Ordnance personnel because they were completely predisposed toward the T44 (adopted as the M14). Tragically, the improved AR10 was tested some years later against the M14 and won hands down.

But we had already been shotgun-wedded to the darling of Springfield Armory, which was little more than an upgraded M1 Garand.

The AR10 has a front-locked seven-lug bolt similar to that of the Johnson rifle and LMG. The gas-tube system — used first on the Swedish Ljungman and French MAS 1949 rifles — was later to become famous, or infamous if you are so inclined, on the M16. There is no piston. Gas enters a stainless-steel tube above the barrel, moving rearward into a space in the bolt carrier's shell and forcing the carrier (which rides in the upper receiver) backward. After about 1/8-inch of free travel, chamber pressure has fallen to a safe level and the bolt locking lugs are rotated out of engagement with the barrel extension. By this time, the gas supply has been cut off and expansion of the gas trapped in the chamber formed by the bolt and bolt carrier pushes the bolt assembly back. There is no primary extraction and the empty case is pulled sharply out of the chamber and ejected smartly. The recoil spring — which, along with the buffer, is housed in the buttstock — throws the bolt carrier forward again to chamber another round stripped from the distinctive waffle-iron-shaped light-alloy 20-rd. magazine.

In 1957 production rights to the AR10 went to Artillerie-Inrichtingen of the Netherlands. Less than 5,000 guns were produced by the Dutch and although some features remained constant throughout this small production run (i.e., the rear peep sight, adjustable for windage and elevation from 200 to 600 meters), two fairly distinct variants can be identified. Since no one has as yet done so, let us delineate the peculiar features of each.

Cast upon the rocks by undeserved prejudice, the AR10 was one of the best infantry rifles ever designed. This early Sudanese model was used by the Guatemalan Army (author's collection).
Photo: Peter G. Kokalis

The earliest guns were sold to Burma, Nicaragua (and thence to Guatemala) and Sudan (where they are still the standard-issue service rifles). This so-called Sudanese model (serial range up to the high 3,000s) weighs only 7.5 pounds. Its lightweight barrel is fluted. The forward portion of the barrel is fitted with a ventilated sleeve. The three-prong flash suppressor is threaded onto the barrel and in turn threaded to accept a blank-firing device. The one-piece cocking handle retracts over the buttstock. The trigger mechanism is essentially the same as that of the M16. The handguard is constructed of fiber-reinforced plastic molded in one piece. Scope installation is similar to the M16. The gas-regulator screw is located in the front sight base and must be adjusted by a special armorer's spanner-wrench.

The final 1,200 guns were purchased by Portugal in 1959. The Portuguese model weighs 9.0 pounds as the barrel is heavier and no longer fluted. The flash suppressor incorporates an integral grenade launcher. The cocking handle was improved into a telescoping form so that it did not protrude over the buttstock when retracted. As a safety feature it must be first pressed down and then pulled back.

The handguard is stepped like the Israeli FAL and consists of multiple components. The carrying handle is cut out for a clamp mount on those units intended for scope installation. The gas regulator screw is now on the left side of the front sight base and can be adjusted by the tip of a bullet. Also the hammer is displaced to the side of its position in the Sudanese version. Other minor changes, like the rear sling swivel position, were introduced at various times during the AR10's brief history.

Dutch manufacture of the AR10 ceased in 1959 when Colt became the new licensee. An improved version, known as the AR10a, was developed, but events swept Colt toward the AR15 and the AR10 was never made again.

Inherently accurate, reliable, easy to maintain and offering high hit probability in the semiautomatic mode, this brilliantly conceived and well-executed weapon is one of the very best infantry rifles ever designed — as long as you don't move the selector lever to the full-auto position (which provides a cyclic rate of 700 rpm).

Burst-fire capability is just not viable with a lightweight, 7.5-pound rifle chambered for the 7.62mm NATO cartridge, no matter how straight the stock is. And although the Portuguese model is more controllable, selective-fire was an option lost when we jammed the shortened .30-'06 down NATO's throat in 1952. The cone of fire at normal combat rifle engagement ranges is unacceptably disperse unless an extremely efficient muzzle device is employed or the rifle's weight is doubled.

Used specimens of the original selective-fire early Sudanese type AR10 are available for only $450 to qualified law enforcement agencies and Class 3 dealers from Armex International (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 252, Broderick, CA 95605).

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EDITORIAL

ONE 'NAM VET KNOWS WHY

by Randall Dick

"COME here, Hoeun," I said.

I had placed the paper mine between us so that he eyed it as he walked toward me.

"What do you see?" I asked.

"I see mine," he answered.

"What are you going to do?" I asked more slowly.

"I go beside mine," he replied.

"Where are you from?" I asked.

"I come from Cambodia," he answered.

"Did you see mines in Cambodia?" I asked.

"Yes, I do," he responded.

I ignored the incorrect verb tense and went on. "Do you see mines in America?" I asked.

"No, teacher, no mines in America," he replied.

I let that one sink in. No one spoke. Each of the students looked at me to see the intent of the question. We laughed, each of us remembering other times and other places....

FOOSENG smiled so hard that the wrinkles caused his eyes to disappear.

"Put down, teacher, I know put down," he said. "The communist put down airplane on mountain. Two green hat American take many Lao to find airplane. We walk many day in mountain. Communist wait for we near airplane. One American die."

"Did any Lao die, Fooseng?" I asked.

"Oh, Lao die, many many Lao die," he said....

"MANICHANH, what was yesterday?" I asked. I repeated the question. She had been looking out the classroom window again, not seeing what was there, not hearing the question that I asked. The students began to laugh; they laughed because they were embarrassed for her. They had told me, in their own way, that her head was sick, that she had the mental disease. The students also told me why.

Pol Pot's soldiers came to her village at daybreak. The peasants knew what they wanted and fled, gathering their children as they ran. Manichanh and her older daughters ran, just making the tree line at the edge of the village, when they turned to see if the rest of the family was behind them.

She saw her husband, sons and other villagers running toward them. The soldiers were waiting for them at the edge of the village, firing low and spraying them with automatic weapons. Some were killed, many hit in the legs. As she and the other women and children watched in the shadows, the soldiers hacked to death those who moved or cried out.

Randall Dick is a former Marine who was a machine-gunner with L Co., 3/3, Third Marine Division, in Vietnam during 1968-1969. He is currently coordinator/ instructor for the Indochinese Program at Clark College in Vancouver, Wash.

The doctors have told me it is best if Manichanh remains in my class, that she needs as much contact with reality and people as possible. Even when she answers my questions, she does not understand. The students feed her answers and I pretend that her answers are good. She is drugged most of the time now and we know that she has talked of suicide. Her people watch her so that she is never alone.

HUNDREDS of Indochinese refugees have passed through my classroom in the seven years that I have taught English as a second language. Each refugee has a story to tell, and the telling always involves personal losses that are beyond reckoning. I have learned that a smile does not always mean happiness, that laughter is a mask to hide the pain, and that the losses of the Vietnam War have woven a peculiar bond between this Vietnam veteran and an extraordinary group of people. I have come to feel a closeness to these people that I do not share with my countrymen. The war is a living reality to us, not some media event that has been filed away and forgotten.

Continued on page 85

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SOLDIER OF FORTUNE is happy to announce that our 1983 CONVENTION will be held at the beautiful Sahara Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada, 6-9 October 1983. Convention information is as follows:

CONVENTION SCHEDULE

Three Gun Match	5-7 October
Seminars & Films	6-9 October
Military Arms & Collector's Show	7-9 October
Rhodesian Jump & Air Assault School	6-7 October
Firepower Demonstration	8 October
Awards Ceremony	8 October

Rooms are available at $38 per room single or double occupancy at the HQ Hotel; the Sahara Hotel & Casino reservation line is 1 (800) 634-6666. Identify yourself as an SOF conventioneer.

THREE GUN MATCH: The world-famous Three Gun International Combat Shooting Match will be held at the Desert Sportsman Rifle & Pistol Club, 5-7 October. Entrance is by invitation only and competitors must write for application. This year 150 shooters will compete for $50,000 in cash and prizes. Cash prizes will be given for 1st through 15th place; gifts will reward 16th through 25th place finishers (based on overall score). Minor prizes include cash awards for top-score Police, Military, Middle Man and First Time SOF Shooter. Cash awards and prizes for top five places in individual rifle, pistol and shotgun competition will also be given. Shooters entry fee is $160, which also will include free entrance to all convention activities. All shooters wishing to bring a guest to the range must purchase a Range & Awards Ceremony Guest pass for $35. Passes are limited to ONE per shooter and must be purchased in advance since they will not be on sale at the Convention nor to the public. Transportation to the range will be provided for all conventioneers, shooters and guest. Shooters registration begins at 1200 hrs., Tuesday, 4 October in the Sahara Hotel Space Center Lobby.
CONVENTIONEERS: Pre-registration fee is $100. This provides free admission to all activities and events, and includes one Awards Ceremony ticket. All convention activities, with the exception of the Military Arms Collector's Show, are closed to the public. Pre-registration forms must be *postmarked no later than 25 September 1983.* You may pick up your convention schedule and badge any time between 1200 hrs. 4 October and 1400 hrs. 8 October 1983 at the Sahara Hotel Space Center. Requests for refunds must also be *postmarked NLT 25 September 1983.* ALL CONVENTIONEERS MUST PRE-REGISTER.
PARACHUTE JUMP SCHOOL: This year the Albuquerque Parachute Center will host the Parachute Jump School, 6th and 7th October 1983. Captain John Early, formerly Officer Commanding of the Selous Scouts Airborne Strike Force and Chief HALO Instructor for the Rhodesian Security Forces, will be heading the airborne operations along with many former instructors of the Rhodesian Para School. Upon completion of the first jump course, jumpers will be dispatched on a simulated operational fire force airborne assault. The first jump course will be $120 per person. Cost for experienced jumpers will be $50. *All jumpers must pre-register as a Conventioneer.* Experienced jumpers must have a copy of current military orders placing them on jump status or a current log book showing that they have jumped within the past 90 days. Experienced jumpers are encouraged to bring their own gear for free-fall mass jumps. Interested persons must send their *jump fee* to: Albuquerque Parachute Center, 2326 Don Felipe S.W., Albuquerque, NM 87105; *Conventioneer fees* should be sent to: SOF Convention, Inc., P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306.
MILITARY ARMS & COLLECTOR'S SHOW: Our 100- booth and 200-table exhibition is being held 7-9 October in the beautiful Sahara Hotel Space Center. Table rates are $75.00 per six-foot table. Booth rates are $150.00 per 8x10 foot booth. Exhibitor service kits will be sent to all booth buyers. We urge you to reserve early; last year's show was a sell-out.

1983 SOF CONVENTION PRE-REGISTRATION FORM*

MAIL TO: CONVENTION DIRECTOR, P.O. BOX 693, BOULDER, CO 80306

_____ **FIND MY CONVENTIONEER CHECK OR MONEY ORDER ($100 per person).** **$**_____
(List each Conventioneer's name, address & telephone number)

_____ **PLEASE SEND COMPETITIVE SHOOTER APPLICATION.**

_____ **PLEASE SEND MILITARY ARMS SHOW TABLE APPLICATION**

Name _____ **Address** _____

City_____ **State**_____ **Zip Code**_____

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***Pre-Registration form must be postmarked NLT 25 September 1983.**

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Or, you can opt to leave the land in its natural state, privately available to you and your family. There are exotic birds and an abundance of wildlife. You will discover the tapir, oppossum, brown capuchin monkey, armadillo, anteater, agouti, grey fox, ocelot, puma, and jaguar. Although nearly all of these species are protected by Bolivian national law, there are deer, bear and a variety of other game for the hunter and outdoorsman.

Whether for profit, recreation, or securing a future, it is readily evident that this land purchase offer is unusual and quite possibly the world's last frontier opportunity. Recent figures show prime underdeveloped land in Santa Cruz to be appreciating at 20% to 30% annually.

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LOCATION

This newly opened land reserve is located in the heart of booming Santa Cruz de la Sierra, an eastern Bolivian state.

These rich, agriculturally suited land parcels are located close to Brazil— the fastest developing country in the world and one of Bolivia's best agricultural and livestock customers. The Bolivian Utah State/USAID Study Team reports, "...the eastern plains of Bolivia should be considered as one of the world's outstanding potentials for agricultural development. Without a doubt, this is a prime growth area offering tremendous values and unusual opportunity.

BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT WELCOMES AND ENCOURAGES FOREIGN LANDOWNERS

Bolivia's progressive government has set important policies to accommodate the new foreign landowner. Special provisions guarantee each purchaser the same rights and privileges as native born citizens.

These affirmative policies create a no-hassle business environment that encourages free enterprise.

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Because of the growing demand and obviously limited supply of top quality land it is increasing difficult to guarantee large acreages. However, for those fortunate individuals who learn of this offer and act immediately, large parcels can be reserved. A few parcels are actually larger than stated, and will be sold without additional charge for excess acreage. Each property is presented with full descriptions and a free and clear title of ownership.

There is no obligation to buy when you send for a free information packet. If you desire to assure yourself a part of this vanishing farm land, then you will want to include a refundable $200 U.S. deposit with your information request to Bolivian Land and Forestry, Ltda.

Upon receipt of your application and deposit we will select the best acreage in the amount you specify. We will then mail you detailed plans of your property along with your Purchase Agreement. You only sign the Purchase Agreement and send our office the balance of the down payment. (10% of the total price, less your $200 deposit. For example, 160 acres costs $5,900. The down payment is $590, less your $200 deposit. Your balance due is only $390.)

ONE FULL YEAR TO INSPECT YOUR PROPERTY

After signing the Purchase Agreement you have one full year to inspect your property in Santa Cruz. If you are dissatisfied for any reason, or if you just change your mind, we will refund in full every cent you have paid our office, including principal and interest. Should you wish to exchange your parcel for any other property, we will be glad to give you your choice of available acreage. Of course, this does not mean you have to visit Santa Cruz during the first year to be a land owner, but we hope you will.

WHEN YOU VISIT SANTA CRUZ

Fly to Miami, and board the Lloyd Aereo Boliviano (L.A.B.) late evening 727 flight to Santa Cruz. You will arrive early the next morning. First class hotel accommodations are available at Los Tajibos, a Holiday Inn affiliate. Or, you may select to stay at any one of the other excellent hotels in the area. If you contact us in advance we will be happy to make hotel reservations for you.

You will need your passport, but no prior visas are required for North American or European visitors. An international smallpox certificate is necessary.

You will find the state of Santa Cruz to be one of Bolivia's richest and biggest, with a population close to 700,000 and a land mass nearly equal to one third of the entire nation.

Hundreds from Canada, Mexico, and Paraguay have already discovered this rich agricultural area and are delighted with their decision. You will be too.

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S

INSIDE IVAN'S ARMORY

SOF Examines Soviets' Newest Gear

by David C. Isby
Photos courtesy of David C. Isby

THE Soviet "grunt" — be he motorized rifleman, paratrooper, *raydoviki* (Ranger) or *vysotniki* (Special Forces) — now has some new equipment to add to his already considerable arsenal. No matter how many Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles or Mach 2 bombers the Soviets may build, they have not forgotten that it is the guys on the ground with the Kalashnikovs that are the foundation of their military power — as well as carrying the burden of the war in Afghanistan. Much of this new equipment brings the Soviet soldier up to Western standards — where he previously fell short — while not giving up his lead in areas where he has traditionally had more or better equipment.

The BMP-80 Infantry Fighting Vehicle. The Soviet Army is a mechanized army. Unlike the U.S. Army, it has no traditional "leg" infantry divisions. Instead it has motorized rifle divisions, in which every squad has its own armored personnel carrier (APC) or infantry fighting vehicle (IFV).

The BMP IFV was revolutionary when first introduced in 1967. Armed with a 73mm cannon with an automatic loader, a *Sagger* anti-tank guided missile and a 7.62mm machine gun, the BMP carries a motorized rifle squad, able to use their weapons from under armor protection through firing ports. The BMP also comes equipped with a nuclear, biological and chemical filter, and protection system. Unlike the BMP, Western APCs such as the U.S. M113 and the British FV432 — the first has a .50-caliber and the second a 7.62mm machine-gun armament — are without NBC protection or gunports for the squad. This lack inspired our own new generation of IFVs, such as the U.S. M2 Bradley and the British MCV80.

The Soviets, clever fellows that they are, have modified the BMP to meet the challenge of the new Western IFVs. The photograph bottom left shows a BMP-80. Its main difference is that it is armed with a 30mm automatic cannon, rather than the older 73mm model. While this means giving up the tank-killing capabilities of the 73mm (which could take out an M60 from the front at 1,000 meters) a 30mm round will take care of any opposing IFV. If the Soviets had not followed their lead, American and British IFVs armed with automatic cannons could have out-shot the BMPs.

Each Soviet division is supposed to have one motorized rifle regiment mounted in BMPs. The BMP-80 is currently in action in Afghanistan, where the above-mentioned photograph was taken. It is also in service with Group Soviet Forces Germany, where a full battalion took part in Exercise ZAPAD. They also trundled a large number through Red Square on 7 November 1982, in Leonid Brezhnev's swan-song military parade.

Standard BMP-A IFV, armed with 73mm cannon, shows powerful combination of cannon, machine gun, anti-tank guided missiles and rifle squad in Moscow parade. Photo: U.S. Army

New BMP-80 in Afghanistan, an IFV designed to meet the challenge of recent Western infantry vehicles, with 30mm automatic cannon and new armored gunport visible under driver. Number "533" means this is third vehicle, 3rd co.,1st bn. of whichever regiment in the division uses "5" as vehicle designator.

The modernization is not limited to gun armament. The BMP-80 (although it is not visible in the photograph) can also mount an AT-5 *Spandrel* anti-tank guided missile in a tube mount on top of the turret. Reportedly developed from the plans of European-designed weapons obtained by Soviet intelligence, the *Spandrel* is apparently just as good as the TOW ATGM on the U.S. Bradley. The BMP-80 also has a number of smoke-grenade dischargers on the side of its turret. These may also fire a countermeasure flare in order to confuse the infrared trackers on TOW missile sights.

The BMP-80 is a reminder of Soviet ways in weapons development. Rather than "R & D it to death" — as the Americans love doing with their weapons projects — the Soviets start off with a good basic system and improve it little by little. Their technique may be slow, but it is sure.

The OG-7 High Explosive Grenade for the RPG-7 Anti-Tank Rocket Launcher. These photographs are the first ever published of this weapon. The RPG-7 has been the standard Soviet anti-tank rocket launcher since the 1960s. It has been exported throughout the world, built in China, used by the North Vietnamese, and is in the hands of terrorists, guerrillas, "national liberation fronts" and bandits throughout the world. While hard to use accurately (the rocket-powered grenade is subject to crosswinds and the sighting procedure is not up to the usual Soviet levels of "soldier-proofing"), the RPG-7 is a deadly effective weapon.

The Americans in Vietnam, the South Africans in Angola, the Rhodesians, the Israelis, and now the Soviets in Afghanistan have all taken painful losses in vehicles, bunkers, and helicopters (vulnerable when hovering) to RPG-7s. All of this damage was done with one round: the PG-7 rocket-propelled grenade with an anti-tank HEAT shaped charge.

The OG-7 is smaller than the PG-7, but is, supposedly, ballistically identical. It is a high-explosive fragmentation grenade, and

Captured RPG-7 loaded with high-explosive OG-7 grenade.

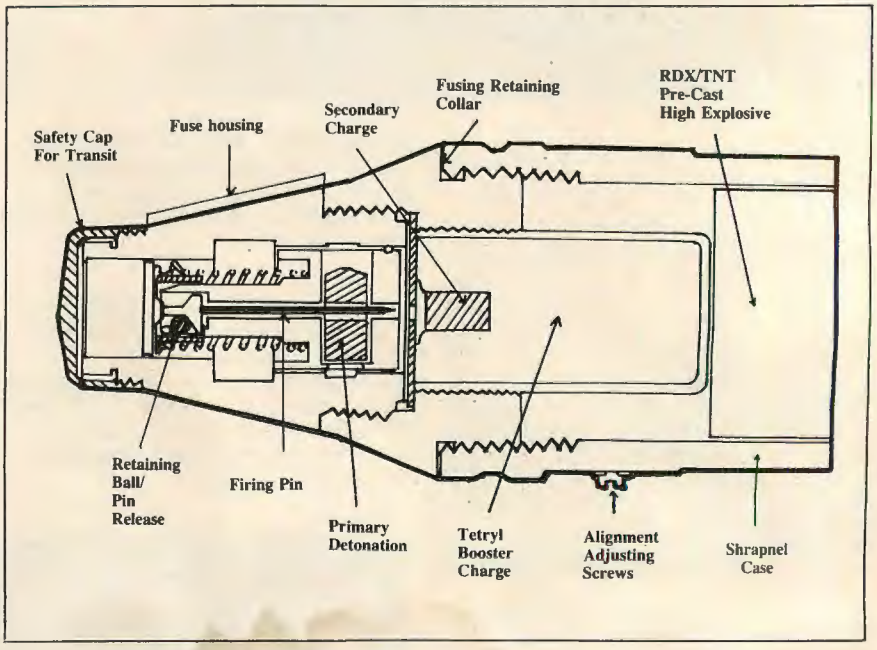
Afghan rebel demonstrates use of captured RPG-18. The tube being extended, it must be fired, and cannot be returned to the travel position.

uses an OM-4 point-detonating fuse, the same as in Soviet mortar rounds. The increased blast and fragmentation effect of the OG-7 makes the RPG-7 much more effective against non-armored targets. As most of the targets presented to terrorists and guerrillas are non-armored, this sort of grenade seems tailor-made for them.

Each Soviet motorized rifle squad is issued with an RPG-7 (or an RPG-16, its product-improved follow-up), and the OG-7 round is now used in Afghanistan, giving each squad a capability to put high explosive fire out to the 900-meter maximum range of the RPG. Because the Afghans have few armored vehicles or bunkers, this round is the obvious choice, rather than the PG-7 grenade.

(The "iron" tangent sights extending above the OG-7 round in the photographs are the RPG-7's backup sights, used only when there is no time to use the optical sights. These sights are inaccurate beyond 300 meters.)

The RPO-50 flame rocket launcher. The U.S. Marine Corps were the first people to replace their World War II-era flame-throwers with the M202 flame rocket launcher. Basically four 66mm LAW rocket launcher tubes in one unit, with the optical sights from a 3.5-inch bazooka, the M202 fires incendiary rockets that are much less dangerous to the people using them than the short-ranged flame thrower. Although the Soviets continued to use their LPO-50 light man-carried flame thrower — also used by the North Vietnamese and the Arab armies — they have now followed the American lead by introducing the RPO-50 flame rocket launcher.



Cutaway diagram showing OG-7 components.

Resembling the "Carl Gustaf" 84mm recoilless rifle used by most NATO armies, the RPO-50's tube is 1.4 meters long and about 12 centimeters in diameter, with sights mounted on the tube. It fires a fin-stabilized, rocket-propelled incendiary round. It is recoilless, and has a maximum range of 400 meters. Effective range for aimed fire is 190 meters, as opposed to the 70-meter range of the LPO-50 flame

The recoilless flamethrower RPO

thrower. Its accuracy is also increased, making its use against bunkers, vehicles and positions in urban areas more effective. The RPO-50 is designed to be fired from vehicles and helicopters. It is another example of the Soviet tendency to copy in-service Western weaponry.

The Vasilek 82mm self-propelled mortar. All "imagery" (Spookspeak for photographs) of this weapon is still highly classified. While the U.S. Army has had self-propelled versions of its standard 81mm and 4.2-inch mortars for many years, both mounted in modified M113s, the Soviets have relied primarily on towed mortars even in their mechanized units.

OG-7 (top) protrudes from barrel of RPG-7 tube with tangent sights extended.

RPO-50 flame-rocket launcher (bottom photo) with bipod extended and carrying-strap attached.

The *Vasilek* (its correct Soviet designation is also classified — the Soviets don't even tell it to their own troops) is reportedly in action in Afghanistan. It is a BTR-60 armored personnel carrier with an 82mm automatic mortar. The mortar, however, differs from its U.S. Army counterparts in that it is capable of high-trajectory fire, has a rate of fire of 120 rounds per minute, and fires both high explosive and HEAT rounds. U.S. military intelligence sources report that Soviet motorized rifle regiments are authorized a platoon of four *Vasileks.*

The RPG-18 light anti-tank weapon. This weapon has been described in depth in *Soldier of Fortune* (see "U.S.S.R.'s Great Leap Backward," SOF, February '83). Afghan guerrillas use captured RPG-18 LAW against captured Soviet prisoners. The thorough instructions on the side of the tube and the widespread Russian-language skills among educated Afghans mean that the Afghans should have little trouble in using RPG-18s against the invaders. It also shows how the Afghans get most all their anti-tank weapons — they capture them.

Dum-Dum and other special ammunition. The Soviets have been using what is popularly called "Dum-Dum" ammunition in Afghanistan. The indentations in the head of the round are obviously factory-

X-ray cross-section of the Soviet 5.45x39mm cartridge, which the Afghans call the "poison bullet" for high mortality and wound complications.

made — not the work of fiendish troops, but government-issue items. The Afghans report widespread use of such rounds against them. The East Germans produce a 7.62mm round with a plastic cap over the bullet — the plastic impacts and the fragments cannot be detected by X-rays. East German "advisers" have used and issued this round in Southern Africa.

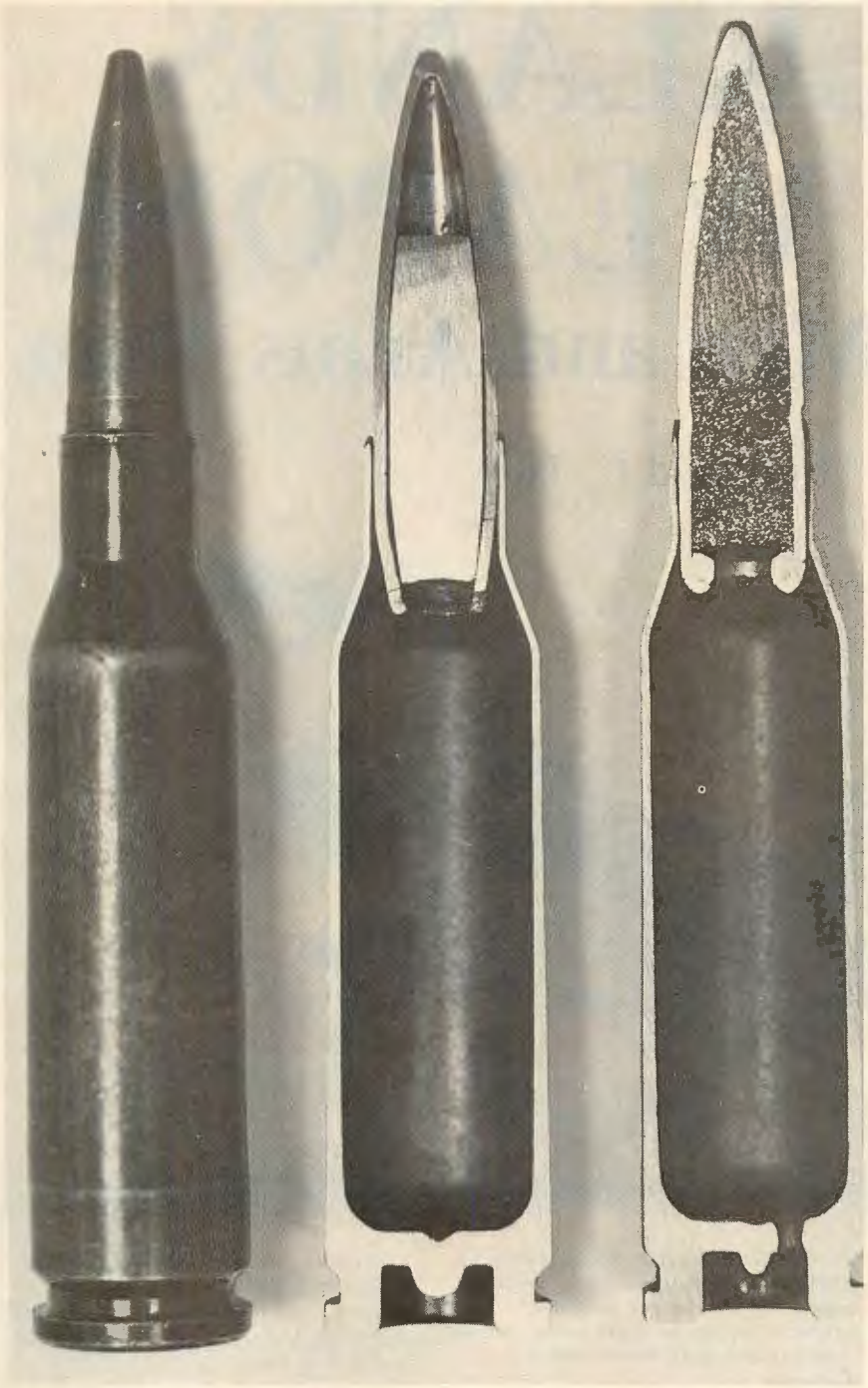
A Western European doctor who was in Afghanistan reports that this type of round is also being produced in 5.45x39mm caliber and is being used in combat. When such a round hits a target, the plastic cap is forced in by the lead behind it, shattering the plastic as the lead enters. The wounds produced by this weapon would be severe and the bullet appears to be in flagrant violation of myriad international agreements against the use of weapons that produce additional suffering in the wounded.

New filter canister for the ShM gas mask. The Soviets are also signatories of the 1925 Geneva Convention against first use of toxic chemical weapons, but this has not stopped them from using these weapons extensively in Afghanistan.

To allow their troops to operate in areas contaminated by "Yellow Rain" (Tricothecene toxin), the Soviets have issued a new filter canister for their standard ShM gas mask which is apparently capable of keeping out Yellow Rain. The U.S. State Department has two such masks with the new canisters. One has particles of Yellow Rain still lodged in the filter. By retrofitting their standard masks, the Soviet armed forces can be protected against Yellow Rain. It is still uncertain whether the U.S. M17A1 gas mask can offer the same level of protection.

SA-13 Surface-to-Air Missile. The Soviet soldier can count on air defense cover. From the SA-7 *Grail* man-portable heat-seeking SAM normally attached to each rifle platoon to the long-range missiles in the rear areas, every Soviet commander has his own SAMs. An increasing number of Soviet regiments have four SA-13 launchers, such as shown in the photograph at the bottom of p. 31. The rectangular missile containers are covered in canvas for security. The vehicle they are mounted on is the standard Soviet MT-LB APC and tractor, the closest thing the Soviets have to the U.S. M113 APC. The launch vehicle even retains its turret-mounted 7.62mm PKT machine gun.

The SA-13 is a heat-seeking missile that will be used against helicopters and close air-support aircraft. With a range of 12 kilometers, combined with the MT-LB's excellent cross-country mobility (it can be fitted with extra-wide treads for over-snow and soft-ground driving), the SA-13 allows SAM missiles to go anywhere the Soviet



Cut examples of two different types of Soviet 5.45x39mm ammo issued — and captured — in Afghanistan: one two-part solid core, the other single, symmetrical lead core leaving hollow under steel nose.

Secretly-taken and smuggled photograph of SA-13 surface-to-air missile launch vehicle. Four rectangular box launchers are covered by canvas.

tanks go. There is reportedly an interesting story about how this particular photograph — the first one of an SA-13 launch vehicle to appear in the West — was taken, but the story (unlike the photograph) remains classified.

Hind-F Attack Helicopter. While the Soviet Air Force's *Hind* helicopter is by no means an infantryman's weapon, the Soviet trooper relies on it not only for mobility (it can carry a squad) but also for close air support (it is the primary Soviet close air support aircraft in Afghanistan). A new version of the *Hind* has been seen with its turret-mounted 12.7mm machine gun (single-barreled in the *Hind-A*, four-barreled Gatling in the *Hind-D* and *Hind-E*) removed. It has been replaced with a twin automatic cannon (23mm or 30mm) in a package mount on the side of the fuselage. This new version may be the *Hind-F*, the long-rumored anti-helicopter version of the *Hind*. While those of the new version that have been photographed carry the standard *Hind-E* armament of AT-6 *Spiral* anti-tank guided missiles and 57mm rocket pods, they may well be capable of carrying six air-to-air missiles in their place.

The Soviets have long believed that the best counter to a helicopter is another helicopter.

Soviet Special Forces Knife. Soviet *Spetznatz* (Special Forces) troops reportedly have a fighting knife with a spring-loaded blade that can be fired from the hilt as a spring-propelled throwing knife up to 20 meters range. Thus, even apparently unarmed Soviet troopers can be dangerous up to this distance.

The wide range of new weapons systems in the hands of the Soviet fighting man points out an anomaly. The Soviet economy is well known for being unresponsive and slow-moving. Yet it is apparently succeeding in developing new weapons and getting them in the hands of the troops more efficiently than the "arsenal of democracy" is doing in the United States. In testimony before the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee in 1981, it was stated that to design, develop and field the simplest weapon — a service rifle — would take a minimum of 10 years in the United States. None of the congressmen seemed to think this amiss.

The Soviets manage to turn their ideas into reality much more quickly. While all Soviet systems have flaws that would not be tolerated in their U.S. counterparts — the BMP, for example, is a human engineering nightmare — they are still effective weapons. And flawed-but-effective weapons in the hands of troops like the Soviet grunt beat the best system in the world on the U.S. design engineer's drawing boards. ✠

FALKLANDS WAR WEAPONS

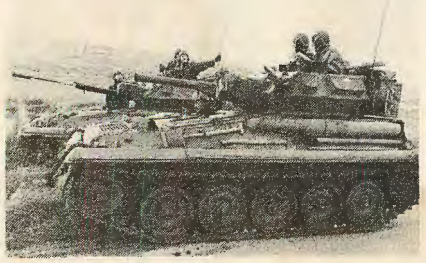
The Best Men and Arms Won

by David C. Isby

WARS are fought with weapons that are only as effective as the men who use them. The victor is usually the nation that is best-trained and best-equipped. Weapons themselves can rise to the test of combat or fail miserably; many systems that passed preliminary tests have cost the lives of those who relied on them in battle.

Thus, the Falklands War of April-June 1982 was a test of the national will, armed forces and weapons of both Great

Two Sea Harriers make vertical landing on HMS *Invincible*. Sea Harrier, by holding numerically superior but qualitatively inferior Argentine Air Force at bay, ensured victory in Falklands. Photo: British Aerospace



Scorpion (foreground) and Scimitar (background) light tanks. Although eight tanks used on the Falklands were not in themselves decisive, they proved importance of light armored vehicles in rough terrain. Photo: Ministry of Defense

Old Westland Wessex Mk. 5 was used in various roles throughout war. One fired AS.12 air-to-surface guided missile to knock out Argentine strongpoint in Port Stanley. Others were used for troop transport, casualty evacuation and rescue duties. No RAF Wessexes made it to the Falklands; all six were sunk en route. Photo: Ministry of Defense

Rapier surface-to-air missile in action. Rapiers of 12 Air Defense Regiment, Royal Artillery, accounted for 14 downed Argentine aircraft. They were reinforced by Rapiers of 63 Squadron, RAF Regiment. Lacking Blindfire radar units, army Rapiers fired off visual control, making twilight raids hard to engage. Photo: British Aerospace

Photo: Paul Haley, *Soldier* Magazine

Britain and Argentina.

The Falklands War's lessons are of great interest throughout the world since, in many cases, other nations use the same weapons and tactics. For example, the U.S. Marine Corps has revised its expectations of Harrier jets' fighting capabilities based on the performance of the British Harriers.

Unlike many low-intensity conflicts, the Falklands was a full land, sea and air battle. This meant every aspect of military readiness became vital — from complex *shipboard* electronics to infantrymen's boots. It was a war that was ultimately decided by infantrymen with rifles, bayonets and *kukris*; yet these infantry were supported by laser-directed bombs, and convoyed ashore by warships armed with anti-missile missiles so accurate that they could shoot down artillery shells in flight.

Studying the key weapons systems of the Falklands War will show that the classic rules of waging war remain valid, but have been updated by the complex realities of modern technology. Those who do not wish to lose lives and battles in the future must learn the lessons taught by the Falklands.

If any one weapon can be credited with determining the outcome of the Falklands conflict, it is the British Harrier. "The Harrier was the star of the war," admitted a very senior Argentine Air Force general.

There were two types of Harrier in the Falklands: 28 Royal Navy Sea Harriers, which handled the air-to-air combat, and 14 Royal Air Force Harrier GR3s, which were used primarily for air-to-ground action. The Sea Harriers ran up a tremendous air-to-air combat record: 31 Argentine aircraft shot down without any Harrier losses. For an aircraft not designed with air combat as its primary mission, that is a tremendous achievement, made possible by several factors.

First and foremost, the superb quality and training of both air and ground crews made the Harriers formidable weapons. Their pilots had trained hard, and knew what type of opposition to expect since they had engaged in mock dogfights over the English Channel with French Air Force Mirage fighters, the same planes that were used by the Argentine Air Force.

Second, the use of the American-designed AIM-9L Sidewinder heat-seek-

ing, air-to-air missile gave the aircraft extra potency. Sea Harriers launched 27 AIM-9Ls and scored 24 kills; the remaining seven destroyed aircraft fell to British 30mm ADEN cannon. What makes the AIM-9L revolutionary is its ability to hit targets by firing from its front or side. Thus, for the first time since dogfighting began, a fighter does not have to position on its opponent's tail to ensure a kill.

Third, the Harriers' ability to take off and land vertically or in a short distance allowed these planes to operate off improvised landing zones, small ships and aircraft carriers. It also allowed them to "VIFF" (Vector in Forward Flight), which meant that they were able to fly almost sideways and straight up in dogfights. This is possible because the Harrier swings its engine thrust around for take-off and landing, and because of its light weight. VIFFing, which the British learned a great deal about from the U.S. Marine Corps, whose pilots also fly Harriers, allowed the Harriers to do things that would be impossible for anything except a helicopter.

The Harriers also succeeded in their air-to-ground mission. Five were shot down, three or four by small arms or light anti-aircraft artillery, one or two by Argentine SAMs. But with more than 500 sorties flown into the Argentine air-defense envelope, this loss ratio was under one percent.

In these sorties, Sea Harriers and Harrier GR3s destroyed 15 aircraft on the ground, conducted reconnaissance, and flew a wide variety of strike and ground attack missions. They made extensive use of cluster munitions and laser-guided "smart" bombs, some of which were reportedly guided onto target by SAS (Special Air Service) or SBS (Special Boat Squadron) teams equipped with laser target designators. Other airstrikes were guided in by ships or ground-based forward air controllers.

Against things in the air or on the ground, the Harrier was most effective. Without the Harriers, the Argentine Air Force could have ranged freely over the Falklands, and the invasion might not have been possible.

The cavalry troopers of the Blues and Royals, in their splendid blue tunics and gleaming breastplates, have delighted tourists in London for centuries. The Argentines were less happy to see them, however, for the armor the Blues and Royals brought to the Falklands were not knightly relics, but four Scorpion and four Scimitar light tanks. They showed the armies of the world that tanks do not have to be 40- to 60-ton monsters to be effective.

The Scorpion (armed with a 76mm cannon) and the Scimitar (armed with a 30mm cannon) are basically the same vehicle, and weigh only about eight tons each. A C-130 can easily airdrop a pair. Their greatest advantage is their superb

Gurkhas with captured German Rheinmetall MK 20 Rh 202 Twin 20mm antiaircraft gun. Photo: Paul Haley, *Soldier* Magazine

FALKLAND PHANTOM
by Donna DuVall

When the Argentine troopers first charged ashore at dawn on 2 April, a phantom voice in Port Stanley relayed the events by amateur radio to listeners all over the world. One listener from Bridlington, England — 8,000 miles away — heard the transmissions and established radio contact with the "Phantom Voice," as he came to be called, and maintained a daily radio link with him throughout the 73-day war.

The "Phantom Voice" was Reginald Silvey, a British lightkeeper who had lived in Port Stanley, Falklands, for 10 years. Silvey, an avid amateur radio operator, broadcasted from his home as station VP8QE before the invasion, and "saw no particular reason" why he should stop after the Argentines came.

The person with whom Silvey maintained daily contact was Bob North, station G4KHR in Bridlington-on-Sea resort. By the third day after the invasion, North was being instructed by the British Ministry of Defense. Silvey relayed vital information about the Argentine troops back to England, including troop placement, harbor activity, details concerning equipment, etc.

Because Silvey was well-known in the Falklands as a ham operator, and his equipment was registered in Port Stanley, Argentine officials confiscated his radio gear a few days after the invasion. Unperturbed, he borrowed an unregistered American Atlas 210-X transmitter, with a maximum output of 100 watts, and used it to transmit back to England.

The set's smallness gave it a unique advantage, however. "It was so small that it fitted neatly into a plastic shopping bag. I was able to carry it around from house to house without any of the Argies noticing," Silvey laughed. Silvey was also referred to as "The Shopping Bag Man" because of this.

The Argentines realized that someone was transmitting vital information back to England, and a detector van patrolled Port Stanley's streets each day trying to determine from which house the transmissions came. To fool them, Silvey went to a different house each day.

"Once in a while, they got so close that I got really nervous, and I did think about giving it up. They put the word out that they would do all sorts of nasty things if they ever found me. But it was so exciting, really..." Silvey remembers. Besides, he felt that he needed to "do his bit."

In addition to transmitting information to England, Silvey also managed to jam the Argentines' two-meter local radio setup and send false reports to Argentine Army units.

Silvey reported that he had great fun, especially since they couldn't figure out who was doing it. The "Phantom Voice" was great for the morale of the Britishers on the island.

BRITISH RDF

by Jim Graves

Just 72 hours after Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands, I was standing in a London pub with a lot of steely-eyed, jut-jawed Brits watching the Naval Task Force sally forth from Portsmouth on the telly.

As HMS *Invincible* moved slowly through the channel with Marines and sailors crammed on the flight deck waving good-bye to the Union Jack-wielding, cheering crowd ashore, there was hardly a dry eye in the Golden Lion pub.

I had absolutely no doubt about the outcome of the war. It didn't take a military genius to figure it out; all one had to do was hear the steel in the British voices when they said the word, "Argies."

In other parts of the world, Great Britain's launching of a war fleet for an 8,000-mile voyage to "sort out" a bunch of banana republic *generals* struck an incongruous note; not so in Great Britain, where it was seen as a deadly serious matter. I never heard a single word about any "lads" skipping across the nearest border to avoid the war and, if there was anyone in England inclined to demonstrate against the war, they had enough sense not to.

Even some military analysts around the world were fooled by the speed with which Great Britain mobilized and launched its fleet. Within 24 hours of the Argentine landing, the Ministry of Defense had ordered ships then participating in a NATO exercise near Gibraltar to head south toward Argentina or back to Portsmouth to pick up stores, weapons and men.

At Portsmouth, civilian longshoremen worked seemingly impossible hours — without complaint — loading the innumerable items it takes to fight an expeditionary-type war. Because the Brits had cut back their conventional naval capability in the past few years, most of the ships put to sea overloaded. HMS *Invincible* for example, designed to carry five Harriers, went to sea with 20, a complement of Royal Marines — and Prince Andrew, a pilot for a rescue helicopter unit.

The first hours may have seemed frantic, but as events were to prove, the Task Force went forth remarkably well-prepared. Apparently, the Brit MOD had locked away in a drawer Plan 1-A: "Reply to Invasion of Her Majesty's Distant Properties."

Part of that plan called for Great Britain's considerable fleet of commercial ships to be used as auxiliary vessels. Thus, the *Queen Elizabeth II* and *Canberra*, two of the finest luxury liners afloat, became troop ships, after some hurried modification and outfitting.

Some of the most stunning footage to come out of the war showed Argentine jets zooming past the *Canberra* — so huge in splendid white that one wonders how the Argies could miss her — in San Carlos Bay, known as "Bomb Alley." Sailors aboard the *Canberra* were blazing back at the Argie jet-jockeys with machine guns fitted to the deck rails.

Although the pressing of the *Canberra* and *QEII* into service as troop ships appeared to the world as a bit jury-rigged — and it was — it also showed just how committed the Brits can be when it's time to go to war.

It also provided the Royal Marine Commandos with a fund of stories that won't soon run out. In a trip to England later last summer, SOF Publisher Bob Brown and I spent hours laughing with the commandos about the interaction between the *Canberra's* crew — who normally haul the very rich to *posh* resorts — and the Marines. The RMC RSM — that's Regimental Sergeant Major — had to keep his men from harassing the male hairdresser, and he worried that the chow might affect his men's lean fitness. The *Canberra* was recovered, refitted and launched into service so quickly that a few odd things went that shouldn't have and some that should have gone didn't.

One example Brown and I learned about while getting the short tour of an obstacle course at a Royal Marines base. It was a fairly standard course except for the rope-climb obstacle: It didn't have any ropes.

Quite innocently, I asked, "What happened to the ropes?"

The chap giving us the tour replied, "Well, you know when they loaded the Marines aboard the *Canberra*, MOD had planned well enough that most of the supplies the Marines needed were prepositioned one place or another, but they forgot about the ropes. We had to scrounge all over the country pulling down ropes to make scramble nets for the troops to go over the side of the *Canberra*.

"And that, mate, takes a lot of rope."

When Great Britain goes to war, she goes to WAR. It might be on a shoestring and it might be for strange reasons, but you can be assured that the Brits will go in with great speed, enthusiasm and an uncanny ability to improvise. Combined, these traits make them deadly.

Ask the Argentines.

HMS *Sir Galahad* ablaze at Fitzroy, two days after bombing raid that cost 56 British lives. Photo: Paul Haley, *Soldier* Magazine

cross-country mobility. Exerting only half the ground pressure of a penguin, they could traverse the boggy Falklands terrain where other vehicles immediately got stuck and troops sank to their knees.

Argentina's Marines tried using their LTVP-7 amphibious tractors, which bogged down and had to be withdrawn (at least one was lost in the initial invasion). The Argentine Army's Panhard AML-90 armored cars could not leave the paved roads in Port Stanley, so took

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK!

by Will Brownell

It is very difficult to get good books on that amazing war in the Falklands. And it is also difficult to get a clear idea of the size and scope of what happened there. Nevertheless, it's clearly worth the effort to try, because this war was a war that was fought well and won well. And the readers of *Soldier of Fortune* deserve some help in this matter, because most of the books on the subject are bad.

Consider the book, **Fight for the Falklands** by John Laffin (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1982. 215 pp. $5.95 paperback). It's so biased and pro-British that large numbers of *British* observers don't like it. The author, who is supposed to be a "noted British military historian," doesn't like to work very much, for his book is simply a scissors-and-paste effort in which he's pieced together the official statements of the spokesmen of the British Army and the British Foreign Office, and smoothed the mass into a pseudo-book. This is the kind of book that's pieced together by three editors, two writers and 32 secretaries working around-the-clock. The final result looks solid but it's identical to those construction projects where too much was done too fast by too many. It doesn't hold together the way it's supposed to. At $6, it's overpriced.

So the serious reader turns to the solid, staid, university presses. Yale University Press has come out with Julius Goebel's **The Struggle For the Falkland Islands: A Study in Legal and Diplomatic History** (1982. $35 in hardback and $11 in paper). Even though Yale is supposed to be a classy act, the problem is that Yale University Press has clearly botched it this time. You buy the book thinking you will learn something about the recent struggle in those islands (Falklands or British). Then you come home and you've got a surprise: The book is a reprint of a 1927 text that analyzed the Argentine, Spanish, English and French claims to the islands. All it tells you is that Mr. Goebel as a law professor thought Argentina had a good legal claim. No matter that, since 1927, Argentina has developed a ferocious dictatorship and that the inhabitants of the Falklands show no wish to be part of it or subjects under it. A book written in 1927 simply cannot be timely in 1983. At $11 or $35, it's really overpriced.

But don't worry — this review is not overloaded with bad news. There's good news coming, just like the cavalry at the end of the movies. And here I refer to **War in the Falklands: The Full Story**, by the *Sunday Times* of London Insight Team (Harper and Row, New York, 1982. $15). It's clearly the best book this author has found on this subject anywhere, mostly because it's such a painstaking reconstruction of everything that took place. Based on endless debriefings from British officers, which in several cases were obtained during the l-o-n-g voyage home when the war was won, and based on countless interviews with Argentine officials too, the book tells the story from all angles.

And the information it gives is a bit opposite of what you've heard in most of the press. The press is full of praise for the gadgetry of the war in the Falklands. By the time the war was over, everyone had heard all he wanted to know about the French-made Exocet missile (which is now so popular in the Arab world that its French makers charge four times what they did for the missile before the war). Long articles have been written about the push-button quality of the war. And probably they are wrong, if we are to believe this book. This book shows all the errors that were made on all sides, and how the human factor became decisive.

Just take the example of South Georgia Island. There were several helicopter crashes by the British commandos, which made it impossible for them to land on that island. The Royal Marines Special Boat Squadron then had terrible troubles with its engines stalling. Virtually everything that could've gone wrong did, but then the magnificent qualities of the British fighting man came into play. A swift, totally unplanned gamble was made by outnumbered British forces that simply walked over an Argentine garrison (which outnumbered them three to one). Again and again, one finds equipment breaking down on both sides, but one also finds the British troops — trained, professional veterans, living and working as a unit — walking through the masses of terrified, confused soldiers in Argentine uniforms. It's like the U.S. Marines against the Boy Scouts of America.

All in all this book reminds me of the words of Gen. Westmoreland at the SOF Convention on 16 October last year when he gave the keynote address: "Wars will be decided by armed men on the ground. Such has been the case in the past, and so it will be in the future."

A few good men have disagreed with this. Too many hours watching *Star Trek*? Who knows. But the **War in the Falklands: The Full Story** by the *Sunday Times* of London Insight Team seems to prove what Westmoreland was asserting, that the most important single factor in Britain's 100-ship armada was the old, battle-tested fighting man, and his ability to rely on his friends when *everything* went wrong.

At $15, the book is a steal. Buy it, borrow it, swipe it, mooch it, but get your hands on it today. (Warning: it's becoming a best-seller among military book buffs, and you may have to either order it or ask your library to get it for you.)

no part in the fighting (the Blues and Royals got two as souvenirs).

Because of the absence of enemy armor, British tanks were free to support infantry, and they saw much fighting in the hill battles around Port Stanley. They were also used to ferry troops and supplies, evacuate casualties, and even for air defense — one Scimitar claimed an A-4 Skyhawk! Only one was damaged when a Scimitar hit a U.S.-made anti-tank mine. There were no casualties and the tank was repaired. Though its light weight means light armor protection, these little tanks were able to take care of themselves in the Falklands.

The Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) has been integral to modern combat in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The Falklands introduced a whole spectrum of SAMs to combat. At sea, the British had the long-range Sea Dart (eight kills), the high-technology Sea Wolf (five kills) and the short-range Sea Cat (six kills). On land they had the heliportable Rapier (14 kills), the manportable Blowpipe (seven kills) and the U.S.-made manportable Stinger (one kill).

Men of 5 Infantry come ashore at San Carlos under the antiaircraft cover of .50 Browning. Photo: Paul Haley, *Soldier* Magazine

The Argentines had British-made Blowpipes and Tigercats (a land version of the Sea Cat), one Franco-German-made Roland launcher and Soviet-made SA-7 *Strella* manportable SAMs, a contribution from either the Soviets, Libya, Cuba or Peru. All together, they accounted for one or two Harriers and two observation helicopters (all probably to Blowpipes).

The true effectiveness of any SAM, however, is not in the number of aircraft it kills, but in "virtual attrition" in the attacks it breaks up, and the number of bombs it causes to miss. The British SAM defense protected San Carlos Bay well enough from the attacking Argentine aircraft to allow British ships to unload their supplies. The Rapier shined at San Carlos. Light and accurate, it lacks a proximity fuse and must hit to kill — a great advantage, since otherwise the British would have showered their own ships and men with fragments.

The Sea Wolf is designed to defend ships against fast-moving threats. It can shoot down not only missiles, but cannon shells as well (although it was not called upon to do either during the war).

The Stinger saw limited use, only by the SBS and SAS, who used it to shoot down a Pucara ground-attack aircraft on 2 June.

Aside from the Blowpipe missile, the Argentines actually lacked enough SAMs for an effective defense. However, just the threat of their presence and deployment hindered British air operations — giving virtual attrition.

The helicopter is as integral to modern warfare as the truck, and both the British and Argentines used helicopters throughout the campaign. Even in the abysmal weather of a sub-antarctic winter, the helicopter proved crucial to land and sea operations.

British Scout helicopters used SS-11 anti-tank guided missiles against bunkers at Darwin, while the Argentine submarine *Santa Fe* was put out of action by missile-firing naval helicopters. The Royal Navy's Lynx helicopters used the Sea Skua — the first air-to-surface missile designed especially for anti-shipping helicopters — to sink or cripple four small Argentine warships. Seven Sea Skua missiles were fired, and seven hits were scored.

As well as attacking the *Santa Fe*, British helicopters kept up constant anti-submarine cover for the task force, which kept the other three Argentine submarines at bay. British helicopters were used for rescue and casualty evacuation duties throughout the war. The relatively low loss of life — when compared to similar incidents in World War II — on the British ships that were lost is due in large part to the helicopter crews who pulled survivors from fire or water.

Blowpipe AA man-portable, shoulder-controlled surface-to-air missile proved highly effective in Falklands War. Photo: Paul Haley, *Soldier* Magazine

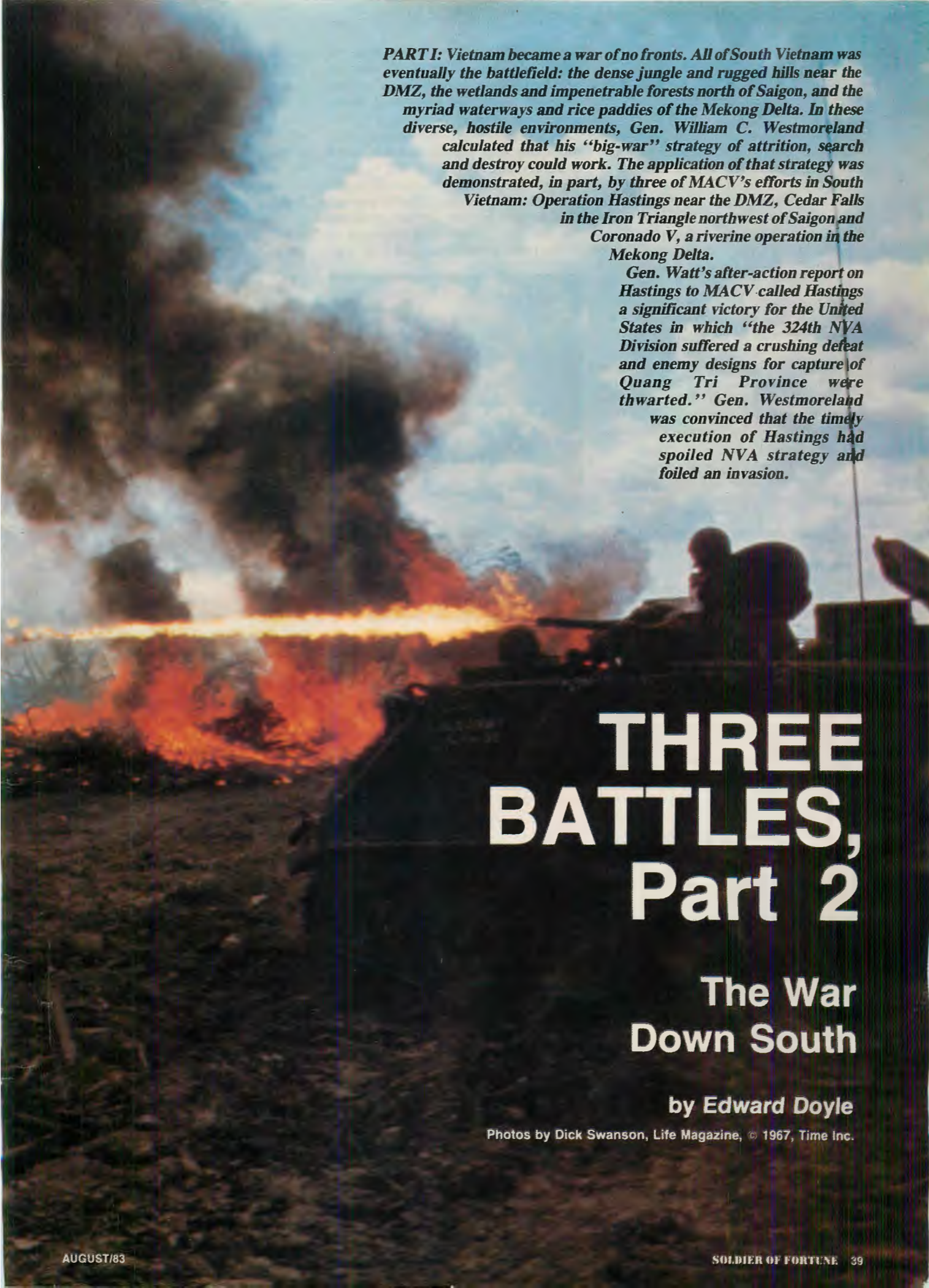
Both sides used helicopters primarily in a transport role. The Argentines used them in the initial invasion of the Falklands and South Georgia (where the tiny Royal Marine garrison shot up two troop-carrying Puma helicopters, destroying one). They also lifted a battalion into Goose Green from Port Stanley immediately before the Second Battalion of the Parachute Regiment began its assault. But aside from this, the Argentines did not make use of the flexibility of their helicopters.

The British suffered a severe setback when all six of the Royal Air Force Wessex and all but one of the Chinook medium-lift helicopters sent to the Falklands sank with the merchant ship *Atlantic Conveyor*. The surviving Chinook, the now-legendary *Bravo November*, flew around the clock, establishing new load records. To exploit the Argentine withdrawal from Fitzroy settlement, the British packed 81 infantrymen into *Bravo November* and flew them in, with standing room only.

Most of the transport flying fell to the Royal Navy. They brought in the troops to South Georgia and San Carlos Bay, then lifted in priority items from the waiting ships, which is why the Rapier SAM batteries were in action from shore so quickly. Armed Sea King transport helicopters, following rocket-armed Gazelle scout helicopters, inserted troops of the 1st Battalion, 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles, in Vietnam-style airmobile assaults against cut-off Argentine units in the British rear.

Continued on page 66

A Free Fire Zone. Troops from the Fourth Cavalry, First Infantry Div. (The Big Red One) use flame-throwing tank to incinerate jungle in the Iron Triangle near Ben Suc during Operation Cedar Falls.



PART I: Vietnam became a war of no fronts. All of South Vietnam was eventually the battlefield: the dense jungle and rugged hills near the DMZ, the wetlands and impenetrable forests north of Saigon, and the myriad waterways and rice paddies of the Mekong Delta. In these diverse, hostile environments, Gen. William C. Westmoreland calculated that his "big-war" strategy of attrition, search and destroy could work. The application of that strategy was demonstrated, in part, by three of MACV's efforts in South Vietnam: Operation Hastings near the DMZ, Cedar Falls in the Iron Triangle northwest of Saigon and Coronado V, a riverine operation in the Mekong Delta.

Gen. Watt's after-action report on Hastings to MACV called Hastings a significant victory for the United States in which "the 324th NVA Division suffered a crushing defeat and enemy designs for capture of Quang Tri Province were thwarted." Gen. Westmoreland was convinced that the timely execution of Hastings had spoiled NVA strategy and foiled an invasion.

THREE BATTLES, Part 2

The War Down South

by Edward Doyle

Photos by Dick Swanson, Life Magazine, © 1967, Time Inc.

3 BATTLES

The Marines exacted a stiff price from 324B for its incursion: 882 killed, 17 captured, and 200 weapons, 300 pounds of documents and more than 300,000 rounds of ammunition seized. In all, 126 Marines were killed and 448 wounded.

From a long-term perspective Hastings demonstrated the problems faced by MACV forces fighting in the rugged hills of northern I Corps. By exploiting their continuing ability to move across the DMZ into South Vietnam, NVA divisions were able to control the tempo of combat in I Corps. Their options included full-scale invasion, hit-and-run attacks and increasing infiltration of the south. These types of NVA offensive threats caused a steady build-up of U.S. Marines from 1966 to 1968 near the DMZ. One Army report concluded, "Gen. Walt, with his forces stretched to the limit and short of helicopter and logistical assets, was unable to do more than hold his own." Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap described the situation this way: "The Marines are being stretched as taut as a bowstring."

AIR Force Lt. Col. Grove Johnson described security at Saigon's sprawling Tan Son Nhut Air Base as being "like defending a stockade in the days of the Indians." Charged with securing the multi-million-dollar airfield complex, only a few miles from downtown Saigon, from Viet Cong (VC) attacks, Johnson installed barbed wire, round-the-clock patrols and a network of booby traps. But no level of vigilance seemed able to deter daring raids by VC guerrillas and saboteurs. On the evening of 4 December 1966, 25 VC breached Tan Son Nhut's defensive perimeter to within hand-grenade range of U.S. warplanes, parked unattended in an open field. Base security discovered and killed the VC before they accomplished their mission of destroying the planes. The incident confirmed evidence piling up at nearby MACV headquarters: VC activity in the Saigon area was reaching alarming proportions.

An old woman and a child were among the Vietnamese removed from Ben Suc during Operation Cedar Falls and taken to a relocation camp.

Tan Son Nhut was not the only target. Eight VC battalions, operating brazenly within a 25-mile radius of Saigon, were slowly strangling the city's commercial, agricultural and communications links with the rural population in thousands of villages. The VC controlled many of the roads and waterways surrounding Saigon and extorted "tolls" for their use, imposing financial drain as well as political embarrassment on the Government of Vietnam (GVN). Particularly galling was the ability of VC units to strike almost at will into the heart of South Vietnam's capital. When the VC sent a rocket and mortar barrage into a Saigon crowd celebrating South Vietnam's National Day, the top officers at MACV and the South Vietnamese government decided they had had enough.

Gen. Westmoreland, impatient with GVN footdragging in pacification and suppression of rampant VC terrorism in and around Saigon (incidents doubled in 1966), opted for an American solution: a hardhitting search-and-destroy operation to eliminate the source of VC pressure on Saigon and its environs.

NATIONAL DAY BLAST

by Bob Poos

I happened to be in Saigon on Vietnamese National Day, 1 November 1966, when the VC troubled to mortar and rocket the capital.

It was something of an oddity for me to be in Saigon. I liked neither it nor the marshy jungled area around it. If I had to be in Vietnam walking through the woods with infantry looking for bad guys, I preferred to do it up in I Corps where the Marines lurked or below in II Corps, home-away-from-home for the First Air Cav and the 25th Division.

Two Corps also had Nha Trang. Ah, Nha Trang. Had congress passed a law requiring every infantryman to spend one week's R&R in Nha Trang, told him that was what he was fighting for and then aimed him north, Hanoi would have fallen in a matter of days to savage hordes of American soldiers and Marines. Those of you who have been there will know what I mean.

One of the advantages to being a combat correspondent in 'Nam, as opposed to being a combat soldier, was that you could pretty well pick out the area you wished to work in and, for the most part, remain there.

But, sometimes, circumstances dictated a trip to Saigon. Perhaps mere curiosity to see what the place looked like. Possibly while hitchhiking from one point to another via military transport aircraft, you might get dumped off there and since the stop was unavoidable, you might do well to visit the Constellation Hotel veranda, or the Aterbea Restaurant or any one of many such fleshpots where one could regale others with tales of his courage during the most recent battle (in modest self-deprecation, of course), quench one's thirst with ice-cold sweat-beaded bottles of Ba Mui Ba and satiate the other personal needs of a reasonably young man just back from the war.

But usually it was because the wire-service Bureau Chief wanted to lay eyes from time to time upon these intrepid combat correspondents. He also wanted to bitch about their expense accounts. (I once turned in one for 5,000 piastres as a bribe to an Air Vietnam DC3 crewchief for cramming me in with a planeload of toilet bowls en route from Qui Nhon to Da Nang, then under siege by Buddhist rebels. The Bureau Chief wished to know what the hell a cargo of toilet bowls had to do with a siege. For that matter, so did I.) He also wanted you to do unpleasant things like work 16 to 20 hours in the Bureau, pounding out on ancient upright typewriters dozens of bulletins, scores of urgents and millions of words while at the same time striving manfully to force yourself to use the hopelessly confused telephone system, half of whose phones had been left behind by the French, the other half of which were in the process of being installed by the Americans — and neither of which worked. And he also wanted you to cover the "Five O'Clock Follies," the daily MACV briefing on what was supposed to be going on around the country militarywise. No need to speculate here. You didn't *wonder* if they were lying to you, you *knew* they were.

A good friend in the MACV Public Information Office once remarked bitterly to me over drinks: "When this thing got going, they had two options: to flood you with facts, or blind you with bullshit. They chose the latter."

Out in the boondocks, it was different. There, a soldier (or Marine) be he private or colonel, was so happy to see you, he didn't bother lying. And MACV, God bless its prevaricating heart, permitted one full access to them — if he wanted to share the same perils.

The truth (you might get killed getting it; 50 of us were) was available.

ARVN soldiers in background keep a close eye on Ben Suc villagers during evacuation and subsequent destruction of Ben Suc village in the Iron Triangle during Operation Cedar Falls. All are suspects because the area had been VC dominated for years.

That was why a small number, about 10 percent at any given time of the 400 to 600 correspondents in-country, elected to remain with the combat troops and avoid Saigon as though it abounded in syphilis, gonorrhea, black water fever and leprosy — all of which it did.

I digress. It has taken me altogether too long to explain why I was in Saigon that 1 November, instead of out in the boonies smiting the Hated 'Cong hip and thigh with pencil, notebook and camera. But when one starts to reflect on such things, the memories are always much nicer than the realities.

Anyhow, it was National Day. I was in town and Bureau Chief Ed White thought it would be nice if I earned my bread and beans by helping cover the festivities. My assignment: crawl ignominously beneath bleachers atop which were perched Prime Minister Nguen Cao Ky and a large assortment of other high-ranking dignitaries, few of whom I'd ever seen before. In this strategic location, I could overhear what Ky had to say (there was no prepared text, but he was to deliver the message in both Vietnamese and English), use my badly battered old Nikon F to snap pictures should the opportunity present itself and then rush both to AP headquarters, only a couple of blocks away.

There the film (if any) would be given to Chief Photographer Horst Faas and I would dictate my notes to Peter Arnett, John Wheeler or, as White succinctly put it: "Someone who knows what's going on and who can write."

I did as ordered and located myself under the grandstands some time prior to commencement of the ceremony. Then began the usual endless wait for something to happen, a common experience for newspaper reporters the world over. Eventually the speeches began, delivered by a line of lesser dignitaries, and Ky waited patiently, clad in his usual colorful jumpsuit, purple I think it was, for his turn as the *piece de resistance*.

But his delivery was suddenly interrupted by the unmistakable (if you've ever heard them) whooshing, hissing, sibilant sounds of incoming mortars and rockets.

I didn't move, figuring the people-packed bleachers overhead would afford the best protection available on such short notice. Then, of course, came the explosions. Close, my ears told me, but not too close. It was probably area rather than targeted fire, designed more to intimidate than to kill.

No one was injured by flying shrapnel or anything else, although they certainly would have been, had pandemonium erupted with everyone trying to scramble free from his seat and seek cover elsewhere.

But above all the noise, Ky's voice roared first in Vietnamese and then in English: "NO ONE MOVES. EVEN IF WE'RE ALL KILLED. NO ONE MOVES. STAY WHERE YOU ARE." Ky wasn't a very big man but he sure could bellow when he wanted to. Would have done credit to some hogcallers I knew back home in southern Illinois when I was a kid. And besides possessing a very large and loud voice, he also proved beyond question that he owned a very large pair of brass balls.

And so that was when American and Vietnamese brass decided, figuratively, "Now you've gone too far! Shooting at GIs is one thing but delivering fin-stabilized ordnance in the general direction of General Officers is another," And Operation Cedar Falls came to pass.

When it did, I was happily enveloped in the great, green, protective arms of the First Cav, somewhere east of Bong Son. And I sure am glad I was.

He called it Cedar Falls after the Idaho hometown of a young Army lieutenant recently killed in action and posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. Its target was the 63-square-mile wedge of jungle and paddy fields northwest of Saigon, known as the Iron Triangle. MACV referred to the Triangle, a longtime VC sanctuary, as a "dagger pointed at Saigon." It functioned as the nerve center for VC terrorism in the Saigon region, with a vast network of concrete bunkers, base camps, supply depots and field hospitals connected by tunnels. Some American officers thought the Triangle served as headquarters for the VC Fourth Military Region, which controlled all villages in the vicinity.

For 18 months prior to Cedar Falls, U.S. B-52s had been blasting VC installations in the Triangle, hoping to drive the guerrillas from their hideout. According to Brig. Gen. Glenn Walker, "You don't fight this fellow [VC guerrilla] rifle to rifle. You locate him and back away. Blow the hell out of him and then police up." The rain of more than a million pounds of bombs, however, yielded no tangible results: the VC's hold on the Triangle remained unshaken. Now, in early 1967, his Army bolstered by thousands of new troops to a total of 385,000, Westmoreland felt he had the muscle to go into the Triangle in force and "police up."

Cedar Falls was to employ a force of 15,000 men drawn from several American and South Vietnamese divisions, making it the largest operation yet in the war. Its principal objective was "destruction of the enemy's Military Region IV Headquarters" and the razing of his fortifications once and for all. If Cedar Falls was successful, as MACV envisioned it, the VC would be finished in the Triangle.

The units involved were the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment and the 173rd Airborne Brigade, as well as elements of the 25th Infantry Division, 196th Light Infantry, the 1st Infantry Division (Big Red One) and the ARVN 5th Infantry Division. Their mission: to seal off the Triangle's perimeter, using the standard hammer-and-anvil maneuver. One force, the hammer, would conduct a coordinated sweep across the Triangle, while a second, the anvil, would position itself to block the enemy's avenue of escape. To prevent intelligence leaks to the VC, MACV kept preparations for Cedar Falls an exclusively American affair. Even the highest South Vietnamese military and civilian officials were kept in the dark until late in the planning stage. Cedar Falls' commander, Gen. Jonathan Seaman, commander of Second Field Force, delayed briefing the ARVN III Corps commander and arranging for ARVN support troops until two days before the operation. Despite the unusual emphasis on surprise, Seaman did not alter the practice of prepping the operation zone with air and artillery. No target in the Triangle was spared, except for one small village — set in a loop of the Saigon River in the Triangle's far northwestern corner.

Cedar Falls, with its air and artillery bombardment, troop maneuvers and search-and-destroy tactics bore many of the trappings of conventional warfare. Not so conventional, however, was what MACV had in store for the village of Ben Suc, reputed hub of VC control of the Triangle. MACV had classified Ben Suc as "under firm enemy control" since 1964 when the VC drove out an ARVN battalion stationed there. A U.S. Army history described it as a "fortified supply and political center" in which "the central organization for the Viet Cong's secret base was located."

Ben Suc posed a serious dilemma for MACV. For almost a decade the village had been cooperating with and supporting the VC. An Army spokesman complained, "We haven't even been able to take a census to find out who's there." If, according to Mao's aphorism, the people are the sea in which the guerrilla must swim, MACV concluded there was no option, in Ben Suc's case, but to drain the sea by removing the people and destroying the village. As one American colonel remarked, "This is probably the only military or political solution for this place."

After a surprise helicopter assault into Ben Suc by 1st Division units, the village was to be sealed off and swept for VC. On the eve of Cedar Falls, Maj. Allen Dixon outlined the scenario to a group of six newsmen: "The attack is going to go tomorrow morning and it's going to be a complete surprise. Five hundred men of the 1st Infantry Division's 2nd Brigade are going to be lifted right into the village itself in 60 choppers....We have learned that the perimeter of the village is heavily mined, and that's why we'll be going into the village proper." Its people did not know it, but Ben Suc no longer had a future.

On 8 January 1967, Cedar Falls got underway. Thirty miles from Ben Suc, 60 "slicks," troop-carrying helicopters, hovered above Dau Tieng airstrip, forming two giant Vs against the clear morning

A suspect Viet Cong (center) surrenders during Operation Cedar Falls which had a final body count of 720.

ARVN soldiers remove rice cache under village of Ben Suc. The Viet Cong, which had controlled the area for years, had dug complex systems of tunnels throughout the area in which they stored food, supplies, weapons, medical stores — and in which they hid during American bombing and infantry operations.

sky. Maj. Nick Primis, the mission's aviation officer from the 1st Aviation Battalion, had everything timed to the second. At precisely 0745, the helicopters, traveling less than 50 feet apart, skimmed above treetops at 85 mph. The lead pilot, within minutes, spotted smoke from colored smoke grenades tossed by the Pathfinders, specially trained soldiers put in ahead of the main body of troops to mark the landing zone.

Suddenly, a call came in over the radio of Maj. George Fish, piloting one of 10 gunships covering the landing: "Rebel 36, go in for the mark." Fish dove toward Ben Suc, taking fire from a bunker. His guns quickly silenced it. Fish then took a moment to admire the view: "You look out to see a whole bunch of choppers ... beautifully coordinated and planned." The landing was textbook perfect.

"Our skids were almost in the water," recalled Maj. Donald Ice. "Then we jumped a tree line, flared up and popped into the landing zone." In less than 90 seconds, all the helicopters had touched down, deposited 420 soldiers and headed back to Dau Tieng.

The people of Ben Suc were caught totally by surprise. The menacing roar of the helicopters and swiftness of the assault stunned the villagers. Maj. Ice remembers having "to push Vietnamese out of the landing zone. They didn't know what was happening." The villagers remained strangely calm, almost in a state of shock, even as pandemonium erupted around them.

Helicopters with public-address systems circled above the village, and ARVN officers blared the same message: "Attention, people of Ben Suc. You are surrounded....Do not run away or you will be shot as VC. Stay in your homes and wait for further instructions." Most obeyed the warning. Those seeking to escape met a wall of fire in every direction. In addition to an artillery barrage, gunships fired rockets into the surrounding jungle, and jets screeched low over the village with loads of napalm. Messages broadcast by the loudspeakers could hardly be heard through the din.

A distraught young woman later cried: "The loudspeakers came overhead, but how could I hear them? The bombs were exploding everywhere. My father is deaf, so how could he hear the voices from the helicopter....My father is very old."

VC guerrillas, squeezed between the hammer and anvil, offered what resistance they could muster. Company A, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division, one of the first units on the ground, encountered booby traps and sniper fire while edging toward the village outskirts to prevent anyone from leaving. Two claymore mines detonated by nearby VC exploded, downing two men. In the next instant, a large booby trap in a tree exploded and two more

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men went down. The rest of the company froze in their tracks. They had wandered into a minefield.

The lightning reaction of Sgt. Ernest Williams salvaged the situation. He rushed forward to cover the wounded and summon medical aid. As medics tended to the wounded, Williams coped with VC sniper fire. He brought his men forward to provide cover, enabling the unit to withdraw from the minefield without further casualties.

Ben Suc had its own surprise for the Americans. Besides occasional sniper fire, resistance was much lighter than expected from a VC stronghold. Yet for the soldiers this offered not relief but frustration. For days they had anticipated combat with well-entrenched guerrillas, and the tons of captured food, medical supplies and equipment seemed small return for the risk they had taken. It was eerie for the Americans to see the visible signs of an army whose soldiers, in spite of all efforts to envelop them, had disappeared, like phantoms, into the jungle.

The people of Ben Suc presented a quandary for Americans responsible for interrogating and evacuating them. The men, women and children, though they wore no uniforms and carried no guns, were no less members of the local VC infrastructure. Divided into four rear service companies, the villagers did everything from transport rice and supplies to construct village defenses. Even the children played a role by assisting their parents whenever possible. A sign posted on a tree in the village exhorted them to "battle vigorously against the American aggressors." All this hindered efforts to isolate truly "hard-core" VC among the villagers.

For the tense, battle-primed GIs ordered to seal off the village, the often subtle nuances and indicators used by interrogators to identify VC from civilian, combatant from non-combatant, were a luxury they felt they could not afford. The decision, VC or not VC, often had to be reached in a split second and was compounded by the language barrier. The consequences of any ambiguity sometimes proved fatal to Vietnamese villagers. In Ben Suc, one unit of American soldiers, crouching near a road

Photo: U.S. Army

TRIANGLE TUNNEL RAT

by Michael Kathman

I was assigned as an intelligence scout, commonly called a "Tunnel Rat," with the 3rd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, during 1966 and 1967 in South Vietnam. During Operation Junction City, I had an experience that gives the "grunt's"-eye view — from both sides.

In 1967, our squadron was assigned the task of clearing the enemy from an area known as the Iron Triangle. For years a stronghold controlled by the Viet Cong, the Triangle contained miles of tunnels. On that particular day, I entered one tunnel after carefully searching for booby-traps (such as poisonous snakes suspended from the tunnel roof) and recent signs of the enemy — and ran into an apparent dead end approximately 100 meters inside. I could think of no reason why the enemy would dig a tunnel so deep without an escape route.

After slowly backtracking, I found what I was searching for. Protruding about one inch from the roof of the tunnel was the bottom of the kind of aluminum pan that the Vietnamese used for washing.

I don't believe I've ever perspired as much as I did in the 10 minutes it took to probe with my bayonet for a trip wire. When I found none, I switched off my flashlight, and inched the pan up onto the floor of a second tunnel that ran across the top of the one I was in. Then I cautiously raised the upper half of my body into the tunnel until I was lying flat on my stomach. When I felt comfortable, I placed my Smith Wesson .38-caliber snub-nose (sent to me by my father for tunnel work) beside the flashlight and switched on the light, illuminating the tunnel.

There, not more than 15 feet away, sat a Viet Cong eating a handful of rice from a pouch on his lap. We looked at each other for what seemed to be an eternity, but in fact was probably only a few seconds.

Maybe it was the surprise of actually finding someone else there, or maybe it was just the absolute innocence of the situation, but neither one of us reacted.

After a moment, he put his pouch of rice on the floor of the tunnel beside him, turned his back to me and slowly started crawling away. I, in turn, switched off my flashlight, before slipping back into the lower tunnel and making my way back to the entrance. About 20 minutes later, we received word that another squad had killed a VC emerging from a tunnel 500 meters away.

I never doubted who that VC was. To this day, I firmly believe that grunt and I could have ended the war sooner over a beer in Saigon than Henry Kissinger ever could by attending the peace talks.

Photo: U.S. Navy

SINGING THE MEKONG DELTA BLUES

by Richard Schorske

American soldiers called it "wading in oatmeal." Even during scorching days of the Delta dry season, mud was everywhere. It fouled weapons, mired tanks and crippled even amphibious tracked vehicles; it ruined leather and caused a near epidemic of "immersion foot," a sort of athlete's foot run wild.

So serious was the health hazard from wading in the Delta's swamps and rice paddies that the men of the Mobile Riverine Force could patrol "on land" no more than four to five days. When they returned for a drying-out period aboard one of their floating barracks ships, the American riverine fighters enjoyed — by infantrymen's standards — special treatment in recognition of the special hazards which they faced.

The headquarters of River Assault Flotilla One, the USS *Benewah*, was air-conditioned, a luxury in South Vietnam's searing heat. Although the *Benewah* was a strange-looking vessel, the more than 1,000 Army and Navy personnel billeted there welcomed its amenities. In addition to air-conditioning, there was fresh food, sometimes helilifted in, and a complete surgical suite able to handle many medical emergencies without need for evacuation. Above all, there was security: Peace and quiet could almost be taken for granted aboard the barracks ships.

Moored near the center of a river, countermortar radar aboard ship provided coverage of the surrounding area, while Army security forces reinforced by artillery patrolled the shore. Unlike life aboard the attacking craft, the Monitors and ATCs, there was little danger of a sudden barrage of fire for those recuperating back at "the base."

After several days of drying out and repairing equipment, troops assigned to riverine operations would be on the move again in the Delta. Some brigades would conduct as many as four operations a month, patrolling rivers as well as engaging enemy troops hidden among the paddies and inland waterways.

In fulfilling their primary mission of providing security for commercial traffic and reducing VC access to population centers and the rice market, the riverine force encountered hazards in riverine duty that no infantryman near the DMZ was likely to encounter. As Cmdr. S. Swarztrauber recounts, while performing the routine, often unpleasant task of searching junks and sampans, a PBR crewman could suddenly discover "the latest in VC booby traps: Opening a bilge compartment, he is met by a deadly — and very angry — tropical snake whose tail had been tacked to the keel board."

Enemy mines were an ever-present danger. Elaborate measures were taken to protect friendly commercial vessels and elements of the "brown water navy" against underwater explosions. Once more, the enemy's deceptiveness occasionally caused problems; as Swarztrauber recalls, "A river mine-sweeper crewman, throwing a hand grenade at a suspicious C-ration box, is startled by a 150-foot geyser of cocoa-colored water — the box disguised a floating VC mine."

When seeking out the enemy away from the protection of their assault craft, members of the Riverine Forces encountered problems similar to those which afflicted American fighters on search-and-destroy missions elsewhere in the country. In addition to their patrolling and interdiction tasks, the Mobile Force employed a repertoire of offensive measures designed to encircle the VC or to drive them against a blocking force, with the Americans' flanks covered by helicopter gunships.

But, as happened so often, when the enemy was not surprised, and chose not to stand and fight, he took advantage of the concealment offered by dense foliage on the river banks, breaking into small groups and leaving the scene under cover of sniper teams.

The experience of the men of the Fourth Battalion, 47th Infantry, 9th Infantry Div., on patrol in late June 1967, was a particularly dramatic example of the VC's ability to ambush an assault force that was disembarking to engage the enemy on his own ground. At midday, Capt. Robert Reeves was leading his men from River Assault Force One across a stretch of water 10 inches deep and bordered by mangroves. When they were about 100 yards from the trees, in an open field, the VC cut loose.

"During the initial contact," Reeves said, "I had approximately 50 men wounded. Some of them died almost instantly." "We had nowhere to go," added a private, "We just dove into the water."

Forced to keep their heads above water to breathe, and immobilized by heavy fire, the men were easy targets for VC snipers. River-based artillery and air support worked over the VC positions, but could not stop the fire.

Meanwhile the tide rolled in, placing the men neck-deep in water and causing malfunctions in the troops' M16s. Four helicopters sent in to evacuate the wounded were shot down. Finally the Monitors were able to train their cannon and mortars on the forest and drive off the VC.

"Their firepower saved us," Reeves recounted. "It was pretty bad." Although a force had been sent to try to locate the ambushers, none were found.

It was a harrowing case of enemy and environment combining to make life miserable for the riverine fighters. In the last analysis, it was not immersion foot, the dangers of mines or even water-borne snakes that most affected the Americans, but the VC's all-too-familiar ability to set ambushes while evading the standard hammer-and-anvil movement. The Delta was hotter, and wetter, than South Vietnam's other battlefields — highlands, northern provinces and the central coast. But in this crucial respect — the elusiveness of the enemy — the Delta war was still the Vietnam War.

leading out of the village, were on the lookout for VC. A Vietnamese man approached their position on a bicycle. He wore black pajamas, the peasant outfit adopted by the VC. As he rode 20 yards past the point where he first came into view, a machine gun crackled some 30 yards in front of him. The man tumbled dead into a muddy ditch.

One soldier grimly commented: "That's a VC for you. He's a VC, all right. That's what they wear. He was leaving town. He had to have some reason."

Maj. Charles Malloy added: "What're you going to do when you spot a guy with black pajamas? Wait for him to get out his automatic weapon and start shooting? I'll tell you I'm not."

The soldiers never found out whether the Vietnamese was VC or not. Such was the perplexity of a war in which the enemy was not a foreign force but lived and fought among the people.

At 1000, two hours after the Americans had landed, it was already hot in Ben Suc. While interrogations went on in a schoolhouse, about 1,000 people gathered in the center of the village clutching their bundles and possessions. Thousands more followed. By now shock had given way to resentment and hostility, expressed by villagers' sullen stares. The evacuation and transporting of nearly 6,000 people to a refugee camp at Phu Loi near Phu Cuong commenced immediately. This sign, at the camp entrance, greeted them: "Welcome to the reception center for refugees fleeing communism."

Conditions in Phu Loi were atrocious, frustrating the smooth relocation process sought by MACV. Gen. Westmoreland observed, "For the first several days the families suffered unnecessary hardships." For a week the camp lacked latrines, wood and water for cooking, and tents for shelter. But even the construction of such facilities could not alleviate the pain of refugees separated from the family rice fields they had tilled for generations and the tombs of their ancestors. Despite the promise of new homes, the people of Ben Suc faced bleak days ahead as psychologically as well as physically "displaced persons."

One refugee, an old man, lamented: "I was born in Ben Suc, and I have lived there for 60 years. My father was born there also, and so was his father." He shook his head. "Now I will have to live here for the rest of my life."

While the refugees at Phu Loi pondered their future, the U.S. 1st Engineer Battalion of the 1st Division, commanded by Lt. Col. Joseph Kiernan, entered Ben Suc with bulldozers, tankdozers and demolition teams. Its mission was to destroy the "two" villages of Ben Suc, the structures above ground and the tunnel complex below. The engineers' powerful tankdozers, M48 medium tanks armored against mines, rolled over the villagers' homes and buildings.

What is left of Ben Suc village after troops from the U.S. First Infantry Division flattened it during Operation Cedar Falls in 1966.

Outside Ben Suc, massive Rome plows, called "jungle-eaters," gobbled up wide stretches of jungle. The Rome plow, a large tractor with a bulldozer blade, was specially developed for land-clearing operations.

As Lt. Col. Kiernan remembers, "I guess it was about 20 acres of scrub jungle....The place was so infested with

A bulldozer from First Engineer Bn., U.S. First Infantry Division, levels a hut in village of Ben Suc, which was flattened during Operation Cedar Falls.

Pfc. George Nagel, his M79 "Bloop Tube" resting on one knee, examines sewing machine found in a tunnel complex by the "Tunnel Rats" of the 173rd Airborne Brigade during an operation just north of Saigon. Photo: U.S. Army

tunnels that as my dozers would knock over the stumps of trees, the VC would pop out from behind the dozers. We captured about ... six or eight VC one morning. We went through and methodically knocked down the houses." When it was all over, according to the Army's account, "One of the major objectives of Operation Cedar Falls had been achieved: The village of Ben Suc no longer existed."

While Ben Suc was being flattened, the hammer forces of the 1st Infantry Division's 3rd Brigade and Task Force Deane swung into action with simultaneous attacks across the Iron Triangle and into the Thanh Dien forest. Theirs was a tall order, entailing airmobile assaults into Thanh Dien, search-and-destroy operations, demolition of enemy installations and evacuation of all civilians. The Americans had come to fight, but throughout the Triangle there was only light, sporadic resistance.

In Cedar Falls, it quickly became apparent that VC main-force units were evading the blow of the hammer. Elaborately planned heliborne assaults into the jungle assumed the aura of a Hollywood battle scene, as though no one was really fighting and no one would actually die. When 60 helicopters carrying troops of the "Big Red One" landed in an LZ that had been pounded by a preparatory air strike, one observer noted, "It's like a Cecil B. De Mille production." Not one VC was found at the LZ, dead or alive.

U.S. forces, however, chalked up impressive statistics in terms of enemy installations destroyed, food and supplies seized, and documents uncovered. During the 19-day span of Cedar Falls, U.S. and ARVN troops destroyed 1,100 bunkers, and 500 tunnels. They captured enough rice to supply 13,000 VC for a year and a wide array of equipment and weapons. The credit for much of it belonged to members of the 242nd Chemical Detachment, nicknamed the "tunnel rats," volunteers accepted on the basis of their small stature, physical agility and aggressiveness.

While Joe Kiernan's dozers and plows cleared more than eight percent of the 63 square miles of the Triangle, tunnel rats explored nearly 12 miles of tunnels exposed at various locations. Descending into the VC's dark, winding labyrinths was a hot, dirty, difficult job at best. The pointman of a six- to 10-man team had to squeeze his body through narrow openings and shallow corridors on all fours. Armed with a silencer-equipped pistol (to fire without one in a tunnel meant ruptured ear drums), a hand telephone, flashlight and compass, he never knew whether the tunnel might collapse or what might be waiting round the next turn: mines, booby traps, bats and scorpions — or even a VC.

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COSTA RICA

A Domino In Line

by Jay Mallin Photos by Jim Coyne

As SOF went to press, the Costa Rican government appealed to the Organization of American States to send a military peace-keeping force to maintain order along its border with Nicaragua.

It specified that troops from Columbia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela compose the force.

COSTA Rica, one of Central America's southernmost republics, is famous for three reasons:

It has the most stable democracy in all Latin America (only three military men have ever been president, and the last violent change of government was back in 1948).

It has more schoolteachers than soldiers (not particularly difficult since Costa Rica has no army).

It claims to have the most beautiful women in Latin America (or, as one

Costa Rican put it, if it doesn't have *the* most beautiful women it certainly has more beautiful women per capita than any other Latin American country).

Pan American World Airways' last guidebook BC (before computers) described "Costa Rica's cleanliness, ideal climate, beautiful scenery, restful atmosphere and friendly hospitality." Walking along the streets of San Jose, the capital, a visitor sees bustling, well-dressed people and stores filled with goods and customers. The Ticos — short for *Costarricenses* — are indeed friendly, relaxed, self-assured, fiercely proud of their democracy and

ABOVE: Nicaraguan Contras practice tanglefoot barbed-wire confidence course in training camp in Costa Rica near the Nicaraguan border. Contra carries M16 rifle. LEFT: Flash photograph taken at noon in triple-canopy rain forest while on limited-perimeter patrol around Contra camp shows limited visibility in this terrain.

independence. When terrorists recently attempted to kidnap a Japanese businessman, it was angry citizens who foiled the attempt. Costa Rica has maintained open doors for foreigners, including refugees, and a good many Americans have settled in this pleasant country.

The peace of Costa Rica is now, however, being increasingly endangered by Cuba and its allies. Emboldened by the Sandinista conquest of Nicaragua in 1979, Fidel

Castro decided upon an all-out drive to conquer Central America — and Costa Rica was not to be spared.

Costa Rica is under attack. CR President Luis Alberto Monge has charged that "international communism" has launched a "barbaric, brutal and dishonest campaign" against his country.

The war in Central America — it might well be called the Central American War — rages with different levels of intensity in five countries:

- El Salvador. The communist drive for conquest is most advanced here. A substantial portion of the country is controlled by guerrillas, and the Salvadoran Army, despite occasional offensives, is basically on the defensive. A good part of the government's forces guards bridges, power stations and other vital points which are priority terrorist targets. The United States is providing military assistance to the government.
- Guatemala. This country has been a target of Castro's ambitions since his early years in power. Its guerrillas maintain a campaign only a little less powerful and effective than that in El Salvador. The United States has not provided aid because of Guatemala's poor human rights record.
- Honduras does not yet have a guerrilla problem. It does, however, have two other problems: sporadic terrorist attacks and continuing border incidents with neighboring Sandinista-controlled Nicaragua. There is widespread fear that the troubles between Honduras and Nicaragua will escalate into a full-scale war.

Several thousand Nicaraguan exiles are based along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border and conduct raids into Nicaraguan territory. These exiled Nics are trained by an Argentine Army group of some 40 men (a result of Argentina's concern over the spread of communism in the hemisphere). The United States does openly provide extensive military assistance for Honduras' forces, and joint maneuvers have been held and others are planned.

- Nicaragua. The Sandinista government is allied with Cuba and has received substantial quantities of weapons. As of December 1982 there

EXCLUSIVE: SOF VISITS CONTRA CAMP IN CENTRAL AMERICA

by Jim Coyne

Suddenly, from the shadows, a small man with an FN FAL assault rifle appeared among the thick, tangled vines ahead and motioned for us to stop.

"No paso," the man said brusquely in Spanish. His ragged beard and dirty, worn camouflage fatigues reinforced the seriousness of his command — his index finger held warily inside the trigger guard as our five horses danced nervously in the deep mud of the trail. He cradled the FN FAL with familiar ease while we bunched close together and reined to a halt.

Abruptly, three more men emerged from the dark undergrowth and surrounded us — each carrying an assault rifle and assorted hardware.

Our guide twisted in his saddle to look around.

"Very nice," I said to him, genuinely impressed. "I hope they're on our side."

"Of course," he laughed, "or we'd be dead." Then in rapid, machine-gun Spanish he spoke to the man blocking the path, who, as suddenly as he had appeared, blended back into the bush.

Instinctively, our horses moved forward again. A flight of brightly feathered parrots screeched from a stand of banana trees ahead. Behind us mist obscured the flat, desolate rim of an active volcano that loomed menacingly in the hot Costa Rican morning sun.

"Welcome to Central America," the guide said, then spurred his mount forward and away.

The specter of automatic weapons in other people's hands never fails to grab my attention.

For the first time I am free of the fear of being unable to justify, on my expense report, the four airlines, two light aircraft and assorted vehicles and horses it has taken to get me this far. "As long as it's dangerous, and you might get killed," Jim Graves, SOF's managing editor, had said to me, "I don't care."

My horse stumbled across another belly-high stream —

ABOVE: Slide-for-life rope training in Contra camp builds confidence and endurance during combat preparations for "The Offensive" inside Nicaragua. LEFT: Eclectic assortment of weapons indicates the random methods by which Contras obtain arms. Weapons include M16 with British Enfield sling, M2 carbines and pump-action 12-gauge shotguns.

were some 8,000 Cuban military and civilian advisers in Nicaragua. Nicaraguan pilots have received MiG training in Bulgaria, although as yet no MiGs have been sent to Nicaragua. Nicaragua is also in the Central American War: It plays Cuba's surrogate in providing assistance to guerrillas in other countries. Furthermore, its own borders are harassed by anti-communist guerrillas.

Castro's immediate goal is the conquest of Central America — one country down, four to go. Beyond that is an enormously important goal: the Mexican oil fields — only a little over 100 miles from the Guatemalan border. Mexico's precarious economic position and other internal problems are undoubtedly encouraging Castro's long-range plans. Mexico's oil would make Cuba just about economically self-sufficient. (And then, too, to the south are the Venezuelan oil fields, which Cuba has eyed for years.)

And in the midst of all this turbulence is Costa Rica. Here is a partial list of leftist terrorist activities which have occured inside Costa Rica.

In 1981:

17 March — Attack on U.S. Marines (who guard the embassy) in the Los Yoses section of San Jose. Bombing of Honduran embassy in San Jose.

20 April — Police routinely stop group of men near President's House in Zapote section of capital. The men open fire on the police, who capture four.

12 June — Civil guardsmen (police) spot two men changing license plates on a Datsun in a San Jose suburb. The men open fire. Three policemen, a terrorist and a nearby taxi driver are killed.

In 1982:

8 January — An Iranian citizen is kidnapped in San Jose.

29 January — An attempt to kidnap a Salvadoran businessman is foiled. Three terrorists are killed: one Guatemalan and two Salvadorans. Two Salvadorans are arrested.

4 February — A safe house and "people's prison" are found in the Tirrases suburb of San Jose.

15 March — A major terrorist cell is uncovered in the center of San Jose. Some half a million dollars' worth of weapons is found and nine people are arrested — a veritable Pan American terror unit: one Chilean, one Argentine, two Nicaraguans, two Costa Ricans and three Salvadorans.

25 March — Weapons are found in the home of veteran communist leader Manuel Mora.

3 July — Bombing of the San Jose offices of the Honduran airline SAHSA. Radio Venceremos, the clandestine station of the guerrillas in El Salvador, calls the attack an "action of combative solidarity."

7 October — An Argentine, Hector Frances Garcia, is kidnapped in the Los Yoses section of San Jose. It is possible that Frances is an intelligence agent of his country. He evidently was taken to Nicaragua, where he

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slipping, searching for a footing in the fast, dark water. For three or more hours we continued to climb nearer the mountainous Nicaraguan border — up, through the lush, mute foothills of the Central America *cordillera.*

From here we are only two hours away, by air, from Miami, Fla., in a war zone as serious as a heart attack. It is a war very close to home.

The existence of Contra camps (armed guerrillas fighting the present communist government of Nicaragua) in Central America is a significant escalation of the anti-communist resistance movement opposing the Sandinistan government of Nicaragua. The camps serve as staging areas, and as an inspiration to others who continue to fight for freedom inside Nicaragua where the war has now become a full-scale guerrilla struggle against communism.

Through exclusive sources available to *Soldier of Fortune* magazine we were able to obtain permission from the guerrillas of the "secret war" to visit the clandestine Contra base camps on the Nicaraguan border — the location of these camps must remain secret for obvious reasons.

The lead horse suddenly broke free from the underbrush and entered a cleared area beneath a protective canopy of trees. The Contra camp looked like a miniature Ranger training school modeled after one at Ft. Benning, Georgia. Barbed-wire "tanglefoot" courses were laid out carefully — log training barriers built by the book. A high "slide-for-life" rope tower had been constructed in the trees. Someone had gone to a great deal of trouble to construct a formidable confidence course and base/training area. Rows of well-concealed thatched barracks nestled in the shade.

The same short man who had stopped us on the trail greeted our arrival — somehow he had reached the camp before our horses. I noticed he held a small hand radio. With the aid of an interpreter he informed me we had been watched "all the way."

He clapped his hands together twice and barked the command, "¡Rapido!" Men began to fall out with gear in company formation to his front. Soon there were about 50 men formed in dressed rows, eyes front.

"¡Presente!" the *commandante* ordered. The men stand-

revealed details of U.S. and Argentine roles in Central America.

9 November — An attempt is made to kidnap Japanese businessman Otayasuk Tsesugui Kosuga as he leaves his San Jose home for work. Five men and a woman waving automatic weapons attack. Kosuga tries to escape in his car but it hits another vehicle. The terrorists commandeer a passing Peugeot.

By now the neighborhood is aroused. Citizens begin firing at the terrorists. Police arrive and the firing becomes intense. The kidnappers, dragging their victim, seek to flee in a series of vehicles, with the police in close and hot pursuit. Kosuga, seriously injured, is finally rescued but later dies of his injuries in a Houston, Texas, hospital where he has been taken for treatment. One terrorist is killed and three (including the woman) are captured. One policeman and three other persons are wounded. The entire terrorist group was believed to be Salvadoran.

These are actions of terrorists — almost all foreigners — inside Costa Rica. In addition, the country has been harassed by incursions along its northern border by Sandinista soldiers, who have killed and committed sabotage in the sparsely populated frontier zone. The Sandinista incursions are part of the general effort directed against Costa Rica, and also are motivated by fear of anti-communist elements in the area.

These incursions are sometimes cloaked as patrols looking for Contras, exiled Nicaraguans who have sworn to overthrow the Sandinista government. They have collected in bands of various sizes and been armed, trained and supplied through covert U.S. operations.

Most of the groups were located in Honduras before moving across the Nicaraguan border recently and establishing themselves inside Nicaragua. However, a few are located in the Costa Rican/Nicaraguan border area.

The probes have occurred as late as 29 April this year and one involved an estimated 200 Sandinista soldiers.

In a separate incident, a Nicaraguan gunboat fired upon and then seized a Costa Rican sport fishing boat in Costa Rican waters. It took aboard two Costa Rican guides and three American sport fishermen, sank the fishing boat and took the captives to Managua.

They were later released after vigorous protests from the Costa Rican government.

That Costa Rica is today having trouble with the Sandinistas along its northern border is ironic. The Ticos had a fear and ideological dislike for former Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza. As a result, the former president of Costa Rica, Rodrigo

BELOW: Contra displays .30-caliber Browning M1919A4 machine gun sitting on M2 mount at secret base camp. RIGHT: Street security in Costa Rica's capital, San Jose, during President Reagan's Fall '82 visit. Recent terrorist acts prompted extra security measures.

ing at attention presented arms with precision and dignity. There were a surprising number of FN FALs, many M16s, and the odd M1 and M2 carbine. Each man wore camouflage fatigues with U.S. web gear, ammunition pouches, canteens and first-aid battle dressing — they were well-armed with all the right stuff, including LAWs, grenades, flares, smoke, the whole nine yards.

Although some of the men appeared quite young, there was no doubt as to their motivation or sincerity. Most of the men were in their middle 20s. One man, a steely-eyed platoon leader in his 40s, looked ready for anything.

"Vikingo," the *commandante,* was 24-years old and had been fighting for five years — first against Somoza, then against the communists. He asked me if I would like to see the men train.

"Hell, yes, I'd like to see them train," I answered, "I'd like to see them march right down the main street of Managua."

Vikingo issued an abrupt order — the assembled men broke into small, squad-size elements numbering four to six men each.

"Wait, wait!" I said, as I hurriedly prepared my camera equipment. I knelt in the ankle-deep mud assembling lenses and cameras as Vikingo waited and watched me tolerantly.

As I ran to a vantage point in front of the troops, deep mud sucked off one of my Nike running shoes. (My jungle boots had yet to catch up to me.)

"Shit," I muttered, as I fell face down into the slime. The men laughed. I laced my muddy foot back into the shoe.

The first commando rushed forward with an expert series of high knee-jerks — stepping nimbly through the centers of a staggered row of truck tires.

"Shit," I said again, as I slipped and went down on one knee — men were already low-crawling past me under a barbed-wire obstacle course approximately 10-inches high. They laughed as they crabbed sideways then forward, pushing the mud aside in haste.

"Rapido, rapido!" I heard Vikingo shout behind me.

The next wave jumped through the tires as those already in front cleared the wire to leap over a waist-high log barricade. Beyond the barricade, the men continued to low-crawl

Carazo Odio, permitted the Sandinistas to base themselves inside Costa Rican territory until they were able to win a substantial foothold inside Nicaragua. There were monetary considerations as well: A later investigation by the Costa Rican congress revealed deep involvement by government figures in arms transactions.

And there was Fidel Castro's hand, too. Since the early '60s Cuba has had a traditional intelligence service, the *Direccion General de Inteligencia* (DGI). In 1974 an additional service, the *Departamento America*, was established (as well as a third service not relevant to the hemisphere). The DA's specific task was the nurturing of pro-Castro guerrilla and terrorist organizations throughout the Western Hemisphere. The DA was thus directly involved in supporting the Sandinistas in the Nicaraguan civil war.

In preparation for the rebel offensive in the fall of 1978, arms were flown by the DA from Cuba to Panama (which was also strongly anti-Somoza), and

toward an intricate sprawl of barbed-wire "tangle-foot."

Each successive wave of the "assault" timed their run exactly as the preceding men cleared an obstacle.

The first commando team hesitated briefly to one side, in front of the tangle-foot, as the slower men crawled forward to deploy on the other side of the 15-meter courselane.

With a rapid hand signal, the first men to reach the wire began the next "assault" with a grenade-toss movement followed by a pause — the others simulated covering fire.

One slip into this barbed shit, I thought, and we're talking real, nasty casualties.

Five seconds after the simulated grenade-toss, the first wave quickly cleared the 20 meters of dense tangle-foot in a fast, running crouch, then once more assumed the prone position and simulated cover fire. The second wave darted behind them into the wire. It was a classic fire-and-maneuver exercise. Once the second assault wave cleared the tangle-foot, the first-maneuver element raced toward a high log barricade, simulated another grenade toss beyond the barrier, then paired off wordlessly for the hasty climb over: As one man knelt, another stepped onto his knee, up to his shoulder and then rolled over the top to the other side. Soon there was a steady scramble over the barricade as fresh elements moved forward and replaced the first wave, then the second. The troops' professionalism was evident in every move. I gestured thumbs-up to Vikingo.

Beyond the high log barrier, knotted ropes swung from an immense gnarled tree as men struggled and climbed to a wooden platform lashed together high above in the branches — a long, thick rope stretched out of sight and disappeared down into a deep ravine. Unlike the old "slide-for-life" rope course at Ft. Benning, this rope hung high above twisted roots and sharp rocks. . . not water. With a heavy basic load, both courses are tricky and dangerous. Already, men high above me in the trees began to sling arms diagonally for the descent, leg over hand, one after another, down the taut rope.

"OK!" I yelled to Vikingo. No need to have casualties just for a photograph, I thought to myself. The men swaying like monkeys high above me seemed grateful for the reprieve.

then sent on smaller aircraft to Costa Rica where they were distributed to the Sandinistas in the northern portion of the country. Later, as the conflict progressed favorably for the rebels, weapons were flown straight from Cuba to the town of Liberia in northwestern Costa Rica.

To oversee the distribution of the arms and maintain liaison with the Sandinistas, the America Department maintained a secret operations center in San Jose itself. The head of this center was an agent named Julian Lopez Diaz. One of his assistants was Andres Barahona. Lopez is now Cuban ambassador to Nicaragua. Barahona runs the Nicaraguan intelligence service, ***Seguridad del Estado***. These men now have all of Nicaragua to serve as their base in supporting communist groups and guerrillas throughout Central America.

The bombing of the Honduran airline SAHSA brought to light the direct involvement of Nicaraguan intelligence in terrorist activities in Costa Rica. Costa Rican authorities arrested German Pinzon Sora, a member of the Colombian M-19 movement. Pinzon confessed to placing the bomb, and he also identified three officials of the Nicaraguan embassy as having directed the operation and provided the explosive. The three Nics were expelled by Costa Rica. (Nicaragua retaliated by expelling three Costa Rican diplomats.)

It did not escape the notice of the Costa Ricans that although the Ticos had only five diplomats in Managua, the Nicaraguan capital, the Nicaraguans had 54 people at their embassy in San Jose. Obviously many of these Nics were intelligence personnel.

Thus, the Nicaraguans are busy trying to subvert Costa Rica. And also busy are groups dispatched by the Salvadoran guerrillas. Rodrigo Araya Pacheco, sub-director and operations chief of the ***Organismo de Investigacion Judicial*** (OIJ, roughly equivalent to the FBI), told SOF that to date "four or five" Salvadoran groups have operated in Costa Rica. They are members of the ***Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores Centroamericanos*** (PRTC), an international extension of the Farabundo Marti Front, El Salvador's guerrillas.

The terrorists, said Araya, are equipped not only with weapons but also with false documents, including passports, and with equipment to make phony documents, as well as equipment with which to manufacture bombs.

"Their plan," said Araya, "is 100-percent terrorist. They come to attack our democracy. They won't admit there is a country like Costa Rica."

So many different guerrilla groups and foreign intelligence services are represented in CR, stated Araya wryly, that San Jose has become "the Casablanca of the Western Hemisphere."

Ticos emphasize that most of the terrorism is caused by foreigners. A year or so ago there had been a home-grown group of Marxist-Leninists who called themselves ***La Familia*** and were involved in terrorism, but most of the 20 or so members of the group are now in prison. There is a traditional, pro-Moscow communist party, the ***Vanguardia Popular***, with a small following, and a number of communist splinter groups: the ***Partido Socialista Costarricense*** (which uses the ant as its symbol), the highly militant ***Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo*** and the Trotskyite ***Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores***.

The Costa Rican communists give some

Vikingo waved them to a halt. Those about to begin the rigorous climb up laughed at the predicament of the first man, caught mid-rope, as he let go and crashed into a carefully selected plot of soft mud below. Filthy and smiling, we all laughed at the loud curses of the unlucky man as he climbed unhurt up the hill toward us.

"Once more?" Vikingo asked me in Spanish.

"Enough," I said, "very good." The men relaxed.

As we walked back along the course, Vikingo motioned me to follow him into one of the nearby hootches. Inside, weapons were stacked and oiled in neat rows, with ammunition boxes carefully raised on pallets above the dirt floor. I counted two LAWs (disposable Light Anti-tank Weapons), half a dozen UZIs, a large, eclectic assortment of M1 and M2 carbines, a Danish SMG and a Browning air-cooled .30-caliber MG mounted on a tripod.

As always, because of the mix of weapons, ammunition was a critical factor limiting activities — demolition charges were non-existent.

"We have targets, but we need explosives," Vikingo explained to me. I nodded sympathetically.

There were, at this camp, at most 75 armed troops visible. Nearby, however, I was told there were two other, more austere camps, higher in the mountains, each housing approximately 150 additional troops composed of displaced and dissatisfied Nicaraguan Indians. All the camps, I was told, were preparing for imminent attacks deep inside Nicaragua: "The Offensive."

"The people will rally to us," Vikingo explained easily. "We will win in the countryside — then on to Managua."

With daylight failing, darkness would soon come; the trails were steep and narrow, our horses pawed the mud nervously, jerking their reins impatiently. We climbed back into our saddles as night patrols deployed silently toward the perimeter — the remaining men concentrated on field-stripping and cleaning their weapons. Bats flashed beneath the trees, searching for insects, and were silhouetted against the sky.

I leaned over and handed Vikingo my cap badge — the old, pre-1968 Ranger crest with powderhorn, arrowhead and Rebel stars and bars, and the inscribed motto: "Rangers

"Reagan No, Peace Yes" read the anti-American pamphlets distributed to protest Reagan's visit; local Costa Ricans responded to demonstrators by throwing rotten fruit and vegetables at them.

support to foreign terror operations but generally do not become involved in the actual activities. Costa Rican security people say top-level communists maintain contact with the terror cells. Francisco Tacsan Lam, director of the ***Direccion de Seguridad Nacional*** (roughly equivalent to Britain's M.I.5, with major emphasis on domestic security), told SOF: "The terrorists work independently but everyone is involved in the plan. The plan is clear: to undermine the government of Costa Rica and to eliminate the free society. This is the only way they can gain power."

Tacsan charged that "the plan" is directed by the Cuban embassy in Managua, as well as other Cuban diplomatic posts in the area.

Part of "the plan," said Tacsan, is to bankrupt Costa Rica's economy. CR, like other nations, has been suffering severe inflation (around 100 percent in 1981) and other economic ills. These were exacerbated by a 63-day strike in the vital banana industry. The banana unions are dominated by communists.

For their security the Costa Ricans are dependent on the two aforementioned agencies. In the cities and in the countryside and on the borders security is provided by two police/paramilitary forces, the 3,000-man Rural Guard and the 4,000-man Civil Guard. Up to 1967 some 2,000 civil guardsmen had graduated from the U.S. military schools in Panama. When Costa Rica was invaded from Nicaragua in 1955, the United States sold the Ticos a number of P-51s at a dollar apiece.

In 1967 most U.S. security assistance ended, probably because no clear need was seen. By 1980 the CR ***Fuerzas Publicas*** were under-trained and ill-equipped. With the Sandinistas now in control in Nicaragua and the entire Central American situation beginning to destabilize, the United States resumed security assistance to the Ticos. Three U.S. training teams visited CR and 40 CR sergeants and lieutenants went to Panama for training. Assistance continued in '81 and '82, and for 1983 the U.S. government has allocated $150,000 for training. In September 1982, during a visit by President Monge to the United States, the U.S. Congress appropriated $2,000,000 to provide the CR public forces with badly needed uniforms, ammunition and equipment.

The Ticos are responding to the threat to their country. A new civilian militia is being raised. Immigration laws are being tightened. The security agencies are diligently trying to root out terror cells, and they are being assisted by citizens calling in tips — the Ticos definitely do not like foreigners disturbing their tranquil land.

For the same reason the Costa Ricans in November 1982 ordered 17 Soviet diplomats to leave the country. The Soviet Embassy had a staff of 17 people and there were an additional eight persons in a commercial unit. The Ticos felt this was a bit much in view of the fact that in all 1982 the Russians had bought only 1,500 tons of CR coffee and provided some car and tractor parts.

The Central American War is on and intensifying. Costa Rica is a part of the conflict, a most important part.

Monge expressed it thus: "More is at stake in this little country than Costa Rican democracy. Here we stop the threat to democracy, or we lose the decisive battle for Latin American and world democracy." ✠

Lead The Way."

Vikingo affixed it to his worn camouflage cap, shook my hand and saluted.

"Viya con Dios," I said, returning his salute.

The shadows lengthened, embracing our departure as our horses walked slowly, single file, into the trees.

AFTERWORD: As this article goes to press large-scale Contra guerrilla operations are taking place 270 miles (440 kms) northeast of Managua in Zelaya, Matagalpa, Madriz, Jinotega, Esteli and Chinandega Provinces. For the first time the Honduras-based Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (NDF) and the Costa Rican-based Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (DRA) have joined together in opposition to the central Marxist government in Managua. A second front under the leadership of Commandante *Zero (Eden Pastora), a hero of the 1978-79 Sandinista Revolution who now opposes the government, threatens Nicaragua's southern flank.*

The central government in Managua has "drafted" four reserve militia battalions to boost the capability of the army, and also announced further food rationing to begin soon. (Nicaraguan citizens are currently restricted to one pound of sugar, rice and beans per week, and one cup of cooking oil.)

"The Offensive" is on.

The Contra camp I visited in late 1982 is now deserted — presumably it has been moved deep inside Nicaragua. My bet is that the excellent training I observed will reap battlefield rewards — already Nicaraguan Army and reserve militia units have been badly bloodied in the first, violent skirmishes with the Contras.

Again to those brave men and women fighting communism in Nicaragua:

"Viya con Dios, — *and give 'em hell."* ✠

Bob Hall — wearing Swedish Fjallraven jacket — test-fires the formidable Benelli Model 121 M1 Military/Police 12-gauge shotgun.

BENELLI'S BLASTER

Modification Improves Revolutionary Shotgun

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

ALLIED in a losing cause during World War II, the Italians and Germans have united once more to market an absolute winner in the firearms field. Manufactured by Benelli Armi of Urbino, Italy, and imported into the United States exclusively by Heckler & Koch, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 933 North Kenmore St., Suite 218, Arlington, VA 22201), the Benelli Model 121 M1, 12-gauge Military/Police autoloading shotgun deserves serious consideration by all those contemplating the purchase of a fighting shotgun.

Semiautomatic shotguns first appeared in quantity when Fabrique Nationale introduced John Browning's design in 1903. In method of operation most autoloading shotguns have taken one of two forms, either recoil or gas.

Browning's shotgun functioned using the principle of long recoil. When the gun was fired, the barrel recoiled rearward a distance slightly greater than the length of the shotshell. During this movement, the barrel and bolt remained locked together. At the end of the rearward travel, the bolt unlocked and was held back while the barrel returned to battery.

Extraction and ejection occurred during this time frame. The bolt then moved forward to chamber a new round.

Though extremely reliable, Benelli is most famed for speed: Spent shell in foreground is three inches in front of half-chambered next cartridge.

Other guns of this type have utilized short recoil. Ammunition-sensitive, but fairly reliable, recoil-operated shotguns are noted for whaling the hell out of the shooter. Felt recoil is severe and they have given way to gas-operated shotguns.

In fact, America's best-selling autoloading shotgun is the gas-actuated Remington Model 1100. Pleasant to shoot, the 1100 is a perennial favorite at IPSC matches. In this system, gas is tapped from ports in the barrel and used to operate the weapon's ejection and feeding mechanism. However, this method of operation is not only ammunition-sensitive, but subject to fouling which can seriously compromise reliability under adverse conditions.

Thus, none of these autoloading methods has ever met military standards for reliability. As a consequence, law enforcement agencies and the military services have, for good reason, clung to the slide-action shotgun with the same stubborn intransigence American police have shown for the ancient, but reliable, wheelgun.

SPECIFICATIONS BENELLI MODEL 121 MI MILITARY/POLICE SHOTGUN

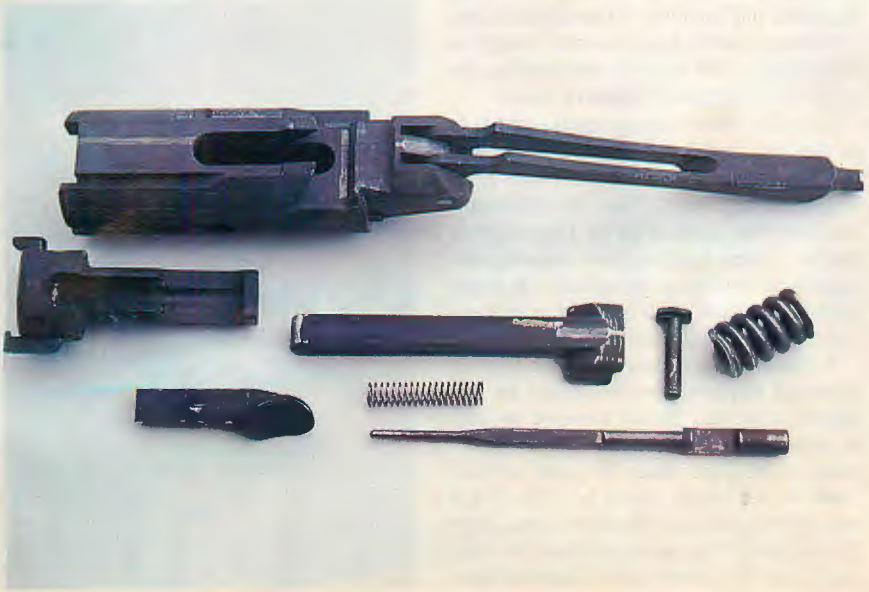
GAUGE.....12, 2¾-inch chamber
WEIGHT (empty).....7 lbs., 3 oz.
BARREL (length).....20 inches
CHOKE.....cylinder bore
LENGTH OF PULL.....approximately 14 inches
MAGAZINE...tubular, 7-shell capacity
SIGHTS.....front, Patridge type; rear, fixed, interrupted half-moon
METHOD OF OPERATION.....inertia locking, semi-automatic
FINISH.....phosphate and black anodized

Exclusively imported by Heckler & Koch, Inc., Dept. SOF, 933 North Kenmore Street, Suite 218, Arlington, VA 22201.

Enter the Benelli. It is most certainly not gas-operated. Nor does it make use of the usual recoil arrangement since the barrel is fixed. Instead, the bolt head is separated from the bolt body by a heavy six-coil accumulator spring. When the gun is fired, the bolt's inertia gives it forward movement, relative to the recoiling bolt-head and receiver, which compresses the spring by about four millimeters. The spring's return throws the bolt rearward, camming a locking bar out of engagement with a hole in the left side of the receiver. The spring is designed to delay opening of the action until the shot charges have left the barrel and pressures have dropped to a safe level, and also to assure functioning with shotshells of varying power.

Newly-designed and installed push-button cartridge-release overcomes only military/police objection to Model 121.

Well-engineered furniture exemplified by sturdy, sculptured pistol-grip.



With field-use in mind, Benelli designed for quick, easy disassembly. Rugged eight-piece bolt group ready for cleaning.

After unlocking, the bolt assembly travels to the rear, extracting and ejecting the spent case. The recoil spring, housed in the buttstock, then drives the actuator rod (permanently hinged to the rear of the bolt body) forward and the weapon is reloaded in the conventional manner. All of the above is best described as an "inertia locking system."

Using the forward energy of a firearm's moving parts to pre-absorb a portion of the recoil energy and power the extraction/self-loading cycle is not new. The inertia locking system was the heart of the Robinson Constant Reaction machine pistol, designed and developed in Australia by Russel S. Robinson during WWII.

Now this same inertia locking principle is also applied to the feed mechanism of the Benelli. As the gun recoils, the cartridge retaining lever, which is mounted in the receiver so that it can slide, tends to maintain its position due to inertia, so that it moves forward in relation to the rest of the weapon. At the same time a spring between the lever and the receiver rotates the lever clockwise on its pivot pin, releasing a round from the tubular magazine onto the lifter, which then moves upward into position for chambering the round. As the cartridge emerges from the magazine it causes the retaining lever to rotate counterclockwise, preventing a second cartridge from leaving the magazine.

Slick? Yes. Simple? Yes. Perfect? No. As the recoil energy alone is used to operate the cartridge retaining lever, we cannot charge an empty chamber by manually stroking the bolt's retracting handle as with the Remington 1100. A round must be inserted into the chamber by hand upon initial loading. Of no consequence throughout the rest of the world, where men of good sense carry the Benelli with a round in the chamber and the safety on, it is a monumental obstacle to American police who must commonly carry shotguns with the chamber empty.

Realizing this characteristic was seriously jeopardizing law enforcement sales in the United States, Heckler & Koch's solution, in contraposition to their ethnic inclinations, is simple and inexpensive.

Only $7.75 will get you H&K part No. 80950. Called the "Quick Release Carrier Latch Extension Button," this oversize, ribbed knob is easily installed by drilling and tapping the gun's carrier-release button to accept a 4-40 screw. After installation, the procedure for use is as follows:

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Former Marines Rally To

A GARAND SHOOT

Text & Photos by Ed Brown

Active-duty Marine prepares for his shot with one of the few M14s at the match.

THERE were roughly 150 Marines there, an under-strength rifle company, say, and if you let your imagination off the leash for a moment, you could almost hear somebody shouting, "Here they come!"

But the Marines on this firing line looked even more raggedy-arse and variegated than the usual Fleet Marine Force contingent. Near the end of the line was a shooter in old-fashioned herringbone utilities and WWII 782 gear. To his left stood a bunch of Marines in leaf camouflage with gung-ho caps, then a tiger-suited Recon Marine. Some wore the traditional khaki shooting jackets, others Vietnam ODs, green skivvy shirts, and some decidedly unmilitary jeans.

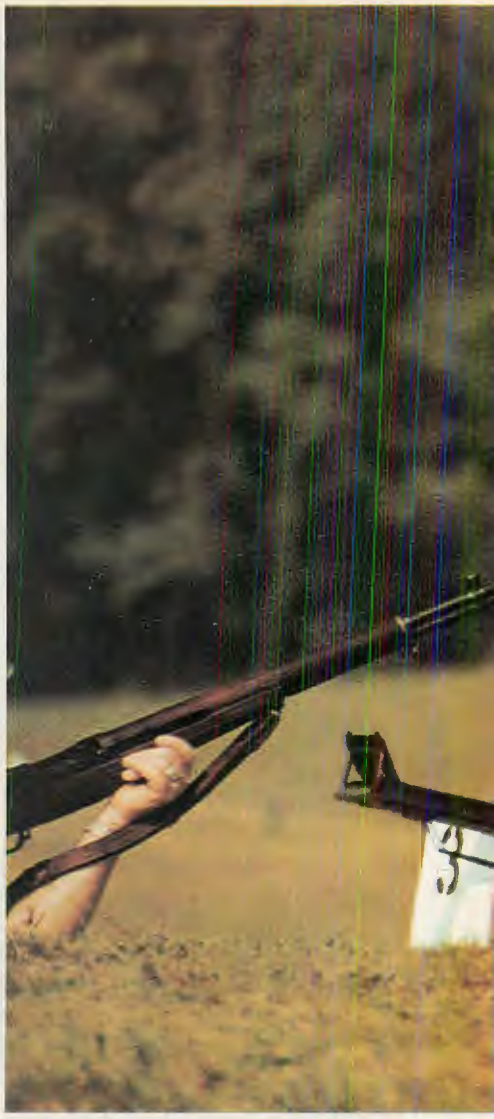
These were Marines from three wars and the time in between. Men who had peered out with malice through battle sights set at 200 yards at their country's enemies in hot spots as far apart in time and place as Bloody Nose Ridge on Peleliu, "Frozen Chosin" in Korea and the Dien Bien Phu-that-never-was, Khe Sanh.

Many, even most, had long since been mustered out of active duty. But they remembered, and the old Marine Corps saying, "Once a Marine, always a Marine," was once again being proven here in the rolling hills of eastern Pennsylvania at Fort Indiantown Gap.

On this fall day they had come from a half dozen states for a bang-up weekend cozying up to a longtime Marine Corps sweetheart: the M1 Garand. It was the Fourth Annual Service Rifle Championship, open to anyone who had ever worn the globe and anchor on Marine greens and who was stopped down in time enough to insist that the M1 was *the* service rifle, far superior to anything, before or since.

Actually, there was an armful of M14s on the line, and a Springfield '03 or two, but the weekend was a down-home celebration of the Garand. The .30-caliber ammunition was supplied by the Pennsylvania Marine Corps League, and messing and quartering arrangements at this old Army training base had been made by match coordinator Bernie Simmons.

Simmons was realistic about the level of shooting expertise which could be expected, however. "Since some of our participants haven't fired the M1 in many years — in some cases 30 years or even more — our scores won't be at the NRA match level. We've set up the course with this in mind: four positions from the 300-yard line, 40 rounds in all, and no rapid



"Back in the Old Corps there was none of this waiting."

One of the only non-Marines allowed in the match.

fire. There will, of course, be sighting-in rounds, but everyone will have plenty of time and there will be no rush. We're even furnishing rifles for those Marine Corps League detachments, or individuals, without them."

But this didn't mean a free ride. Shooters had to run the match themselves, taking turns in the butts pulling targets, manning the field phones and policing up everything from their brass to empty C-rat cans. It wouldn't do to leave a hangover mess for the Army in their own backyard.

The five-man team with the highest aggregate would be named Pennsylvania Marine Corps League Service Rifle Champions, and there would be a handsome trophy for the high shooter: "Best Marine Rifleman of 1982." Some straight-shooting Marines could count on taking away more than the memory of a pleasant weekend when they started home from Indiantown Gap on Sunday night.

Bernie Simmons and the rest who have been getting this annual all-Marine shoot

"Dammit! There's nothing here but ham 'n' limas." Marines overwhelmed by sentiment at immersion-heated C-rat banquet.

together for the past four years do their best to make it seem like a real "Marine Machine" occasion. From the admin order, covering procedures and contingencies, to the range safety regs, it was GI all the way.

"Ready on the right, ready on the left, all ready on the firing line: commence firing"...Smokey Bear hats, spotting scopes, ponchos spread as ground cloths, shouted directions to the field phones to check hits, the hesitant stutter of aimed fire, and everywhere what novelist Frederick Forsyth called "the greatest intoxicant in the world...the reek of cordite." The atmosphere was real.

While the early relays were firing, I took some time to talk to some of the Marines waiting around behind the line for their turn in the butts or for their time to shoot. I'd say at least three quarters of the shooters were either WWII or Korean vintage, with the rest either Vietnam or later, including, of course, H&HC staffs and Marine Corps Reserve outfits there.

One Marine with a camouflaged skivvy shirt, which read "Remember the Viet-Vet" on the back, had come up from Baltimore for the shoot. He was Jim Soukup, and he'd spent a year in the bush in I Corps with the 1st Bn., 1st Marines. Soukup had qualified with the M14 and had used it for a time in 'Nam, then made the switch to the M16 rifle.

"A lot of guys had problems with the 16, but mine was okay," he recalled.

"Both of these weapons provide a function. I'd prefer to carry the 16 in the bush, as a matter of fact.

"I've not yet fired the M1, but look forward to it. I've heard plenty about it, of course, and my first question to the guys coming off the line is, 'How does your shoulder feel after 40 rounds?'

"I haven't fired any high-powered weapons for a while and so I thought I'd wander up here and see how I could do. It's been interesting and I've met a lot of nice people, especially the 'Old Corps,' having a good time."

One of the more colorful groups at Indiantown Gap that weekend was from Long Island. "The Irish Marine Corps League Detachment," as they called themselves. Tom Cleary, Jack Reilly and Bill Riordan.

Cleary said he had come up "to renew some old skills" from his Korean War days. The M1 was his TO&E weapon back in 1951, and "from what I hear, we still ought to be using it. The current Marine Corps rifle doesn't appear able to do the job. Of course it depends on the old saw, 'the terrain and the situation,' but a rifle like the M1 is hard to beat.

"A get-together like this is number one. If you are one, you're comfortable around a bunch of Marines, young or old, because everybody is the same. Marines today do the same thing they always did: bitch, piss and moan — and then go out and knock themselves out doing their best."

Reilly and I discovered we had been at Parris Island at the same time and reminisced about the hurricane which came ashore there that summer. Reilly was in the 1st Marines in Korea and also has some opinions about what rifle the Corps ought to be using.

"I really don't see why or how we got away from the M1, though maybe a bigger round capacity might be the thing. Maybe the M14 is a good compromise. I don't think the M16 has what it takes to go through heavy clothing or body armor at 300 meters. The name of the game is to knock the other guy down while he's still a good way off. You don't want him to get a shot at you that might connect."

Continued on page 83

Aimed Fire: a Marine maxim. Vietnam-era Marine prepares to shoot 300-yard prone-position course.

Photo: Bob Poos

RIFLEMAN'S RIFLE

by Bob Poos

I am ancient enough to have qualified with the M1 as a boot at Parris Island. In 1948.

I came to know and love them. (One had better in the Marines, if he knew what was good for him.) The one I had the longest — 1950 and '51 — had a serial number of 2277122. Match that for memory, you other old bastards out there.

And I'll never forget the first time I saw one. It was during the first week at PI and shortly after being issued clothing. We were marching somewhere and saw a recruit standing naked atop a crude wooden table. In his right hand he clutched an M1 and in the left, his penis. He was shouting: "This is my rifle," brandishing the M1, and then, "This is my gun. This is for fighting, and this is for fun."

The day my platoon, 219 — later to become an Honor Platoon of the 2nd Recruit Training Bn. — fired for qualification was similar to that described so well by Robert Leckie in his excellent book about being a Marine in WWII, *Helmet For My Pillow*: The weather had been beautiful all week (for Parris Island) up until the day before qualification, when one of those South Carolina tropical storms burst upon us. It abated by the next day, but a strong wind still blew, driving raindrops that stung like needles.

I had fired expert earlier, but was lucky to make marksman this day. Five guys did not qualify, much to the outrage of Sgt. Elijah Davis and Cpl. Robert Miles, our DIs. They suffered for it. I never again failed to win the crossed rifles and wreath of expert...in fact still have one at home somewhere.

I understand the nostalgia felt for that great invention of John Garand's. It was a real rifle, a *rifleman's* weapon, and that's the highest accolade that can be given to any rifle. These funny-looking Buck Rogers zap guns will never enjoy the real love an M1 did. And for my money, they'll never qualify as a rifleman's rifle. Most are too bulky and awkward, for one thing. And that thing they issue to U.S. troops these days is — in my opinion — beneath contempt. And just name me any other weapon that managed to conquer a foe so formidable as the Japanese Empire, and the Germans, North Koreans and the Chinese.

They say the M16 is a fine jungle weapon. Maybe. But Guadalcanal and New Georgia were also a little on the jungley side. And I'd hate to be opposing a Chinese mass assault beginning 600 or 700 yards away with an M16.

Only one thing wrong with the M1 I can recall. Its eight-cartridge clip made a loud *ringggging* sound as it ejected with the last round. That served to let its user know it was empty, if he wasn't already aware of that fact.

It also told others the same thing.

In semi-darkness on a Korean hilltop when the cold, clear air carried sound waves like a trumpet, it was the loudest noise in the world.

IT'S 9.5 POUNDS OF ROMPIN', STOMPIN', KILLIN' POWER

by Ed Brown

When the M1 Garand replaced the Springfield '03 in the early days of WWII, there was grumbling from some tradition-bound Marines who were concerned that the new weapon wouldn't measure up to the tried and tested Springfield.

But the M1 quickly won its spurs among Marines as a rugged, accurate mankiller. As usual, the Marines were on the hind end when it came to the issuing of choice new gear, and for many Marines the coveted M1 was long in coming.

There's the apocryphal story of the young Marine who was following an Army sergeant around on Guadalcanal in '42. Finally, the soldier got fed up with his shadow and asked him what the hell was going on.

"Sarge," the Marine said, eyeing his own issue Reising Gun, "One of these days a Jap is going to put one right between your horns, and I'm going to have your M1 before it hits the ground."

The Garand had a long way to go before it was adopted as the "U.S. Rifle, cal. .30, M1." The search began as far back as WWI to find a reliable semiautomatic rifle for the American soldier, and tests were made on a whole armory of weapons, including the Bang, Liu, the St. Etienne and the Pedersen before the ordnance people settled on the Garand in 1936.

As used in the Big War and Korea, the standard M1 weighed in at 9.5 pounds, and used an eight-round staggered clip full of hefty .30-06 rounds. You could take a brick wall down with an M1 if you had enough ammunition.

Springfield and Winchester manufactured the M1 during WWII and turned out something like 4,040,000 during the shooting. Another 600,000 were made by Springfield, International Harvester, and Harrington and Richardson after the war. Breda and Beretta made the Garand under license for the Italian, Danish and Indonesian forces.

The rifle loads from the top of the receiver, with the operating handle held to the rear with the edge of the hand. The shooter pushes the clip down into the receiver with his thumb, then gets it out of the way before the first round touches bottom and the action slams forward to strip a cartridge off the top of the clip and chamber it. New shooters didn't have to be told twice to get their fingers out of the receiver in a hurry; one case of "M1 thumb" was all the schooling needed.

The trigger pull of the M1 is crisp, what one might expect of a rugged military rifle, and part of the recoil of the honest-to-god .30-06 cartridge is neutralized by the take-up of the gas cylinder operation which runs things in this semiautomatic weapon, extracting and ejecting the spent case, chambering a fresh round, and cocking the piece.

The first step in field-stripping the M1 is to pull free the trigger housing group, separating the weapon into three parts: the trigger housing group, barrel and receiver assembly, and the wooden stock. Marine aggressors at inhospitable places like Pickel Meadows used to discomfit sleeping war gamesmen by gently lifting the trigger housing units of their rifles, leaving the hapless trainees to tote the weapon in two pieces the next day — and until the problem was over. Very embarrassing!

Freeing the follower rod is next, then the follower arm pin, and the bullet guide, follower arm and operating rod catch assembly come off. The follower with slide is lifted out, the operating rod handle disengaged, and the bolt slid forward and twisted out of the receiver. The weapon is now field-stripped.

There's something mighty reassuring about the sturdy M1, with its hardwood stock running clear up to the gas cylinder lock. If you had to batter someone senseless with the weapon, then shoot his friends who were trying to run away, you feel you could do it without any problem.

SOF Visits America's Front Line With

BATTLING BEL

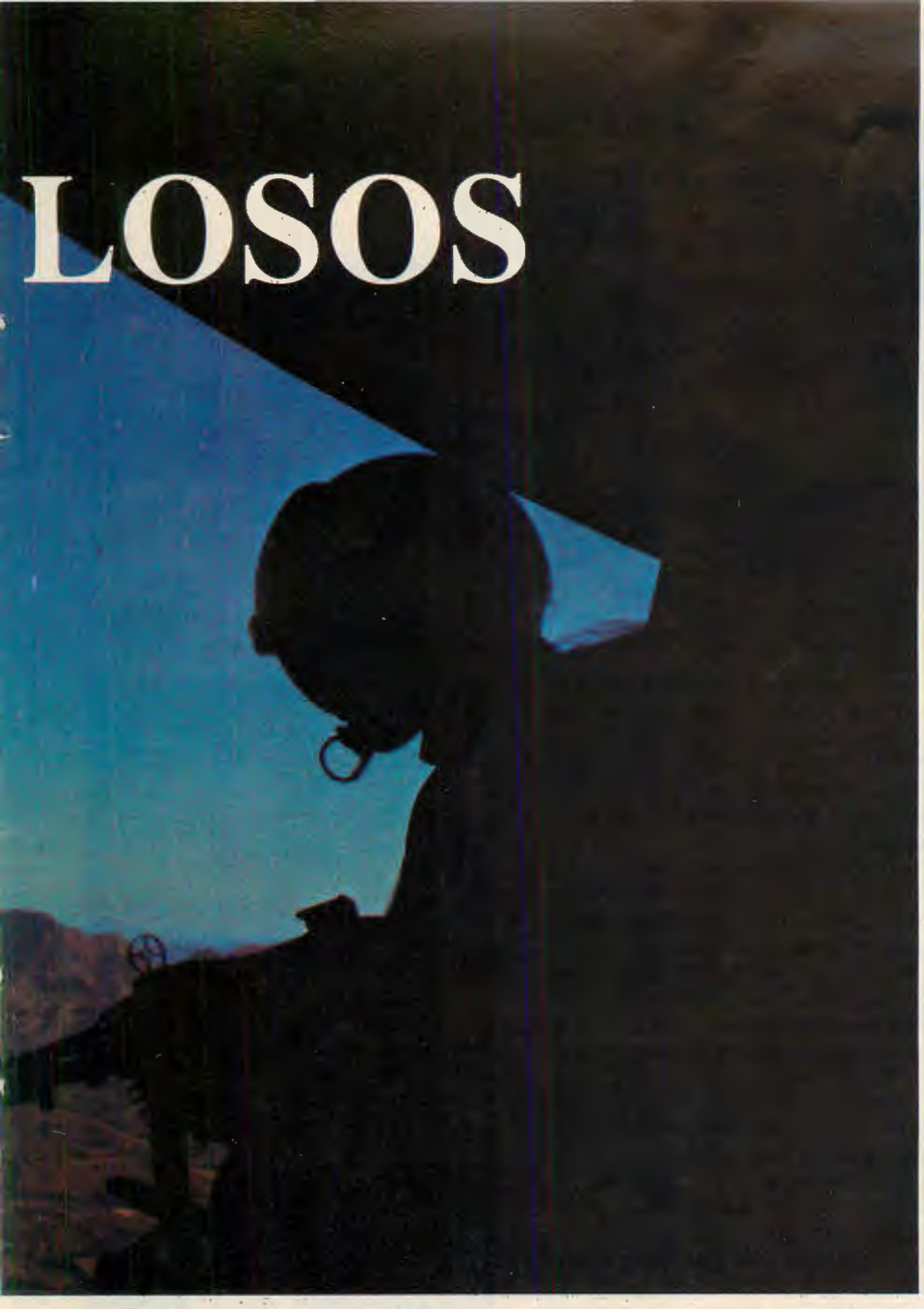
Text & Photos by John Metzger

IRONICALLY, it happened to be Valentine's Day when we drove from the hotel to Ilopango Air Base, just outside the capital of San Salvador in El Salvador. Ironically because there is a flaming communist insurgency going on in this country and the atmosphere is one of violence rather than of love.

There was talk of going out on an army operation. Nothing definite, of course. We were loitering around airborne battalion headquarters when the U.S. military group sergeant told us that the air force colonel would see us now. He greeted us warmly and said that some of us could go on an afternoon aerial recon run with the air force, and the rest could go out in the field with the elite Belloso Battalion, operating northeast of San Salvador in Morazan Province. Our leader, Robert K. Brown, made the decision.

He pointed at me (I had the cameras) and two American veterans of the Rhodesian conflict travelling with the SOF team, Smith and Kowalski (not their real names).

LOSOS



El Salvador Air Force Huey carries SOF team into Morazan Province. Doorgunner scans below with M60 for guerrilla movement, SOF staffers hold M16s at ready.

SOF Associate Editor John Metzger (left) and "Kowalski" (center) observe Belloso Battalion perimeter defense on hilltop above village of Perquin. Rifles are M16s, trooper on right mans M60.

We would be going out in the bush.

Much to our surprise and pleasure, Smith, Kowalski and I were issued M16s, web gear with extra ammo, canteens and uniforms. We jumped into a DC-3 and landed 40 minutes later in the northeastern mountain town of San Francisco de Gotera. We met briefly with some junior officers, sharing an army lunch of tortillas, beans and rice with them in their mess. Discipline was slack in this rear area garrison, and no one seemed to know or care what was going on.

A 50-klick trip in a Huey, M60 doorgunners scanning below for guerrilla movement, brought us to a village named Perquin. When we touched down at the LZ there, Capt. Reyes, a sharp young officer, greeted us..

The difference between the soldiers here and those in the rear was clearly evident. The Belloso Battalion troopers are tough, well-trained and combat-ready. And they know it. The entire battalion of 952 men and 25 officers was trained at Ft. Bragg and has been operational since May 1982. The Belloso is one of three immediate reaction battalions. The other two — the Atlacatl and the Atonal — were trained by American instructors in El Salvador.

The government has been keeping the Belloso in combat, where the going is toughest. Why not use your best? And that's why they were here in Morazan Province, a guerrilla stronghold, close to supply routes from Nicaragua and Honduras.

"We are working on the second stage of operations," explained Reyes. "The first

Capt. Perdomo (foreground) receives transmission from forward observation post and pinpoints location of armed guerrilla concentration. Perdomo was shot next morning in fight against 60 guerrillas, and is now recovering in San Salvador hospital.

stage was to clear out high-density guerrilla operational areas. Now we're clearing out pockets of resistance and trying to hold what we have retaken."

I asked him about the battalion's Stateside training, if it was applicable to the situation in which it was now operating.

"The training was outstanding," said Reyes, "but it was not oriented to this kind of war. It was not specialized. We have had to adapt."

Reyes introduced us to Perquin's garrison commander, Maj. Corado. I asked him if he would recommend any changes for units training in the United States in the future: "First, let me say that the training was excellent and it has certainly saved lives," said Corado. "But there could be a combination of tactical training with different organization. Using different techniques, like Special Forces-style patrols, we could fight a different war. We heard at Bragg that some U.S. senators and congressmen simply objected to our receiving counterinsurgency training and wanted us limited to conventional warfare.We need special instruction in counterinsurgency warfare, small-unit tactics, etc."

When the battalion retook Perquin one week ago, it was a ghost town. Only three or four civilians were left. Now that the area is secure again, 500 have returned. With only three immediate reaction battalions, the Salvos have difficulty holding the towns they retake.

Perquin is a fine example of what confronts the Salvadoran Army. With only three quick reaction battalions, it is difficult to take and hold areas long enough to establish a government presence and then prove to the people caught in between the guerrillas and the army that the latter is preferable.

"The guerrillas attack towns where we have been forced to leave only a few men," said Corado. "They attack 20 men with hundreds of fighters, and claim great victories."

Leaning against an adobe wall at Corado's HQ were some captured rifles: FNs, a couple of German Mauser 98s, a Czech Brno, an American hunting rifle, all in terrible shape. There was one M16 with serial number 5397136, which corresponds with the series used in Vietnam.

We were invited to spend the night on a hilltop above the town. It was held by a company commanded by Capt. Gustavo Perdomo. Two of Perdomo's men were in town on a water run, and they escorted us up a steep goat trail, where we passed destroyed guerrilla bunkers on the way to the top of a ridge. Honduran mountains loomed in the distance. Hard-looking soldiers manned the perimeter, alert but relaxed. *This* was the front line in Morazan Province.

Capt. Perdomo, an intense young officer in full battle dress, greeted us and said he was pleased to have us as his guests. We sat around a campfire while he explained organizational structure. His company is divided into assault groups, stop groups, sniper teams, mortar teams and one 90mm recoilless rifle team.

There are patrols running at all times. The men are aggressive and tight discipline is maintained by the NCOs. Perdomo calls them his "tigers." In 13 months, the captain has not lost a man. Their biggest fight occurred in December 1982, when they killed 32 guerrillas in a five-day period.

"Combat pleases us," said Perdomo. "We are an aggressive unit — all voluntary. Most of the men in my company have been in at least four years and have seen lots of combat."

As he spoke, his radio man received a transmission. The forward observation post, located about 100 meters from the perimeter, had spotted a guerrilla concentration, estimated at 60 men with machine guns and RPG-2 rockets. Perdomo checked with headquarters and was issued orders to attack at dawn.

"Tomorrow will be a great day," he said. "There *will* be a few less guerrillas in this world when we are through." Before operational orders were given at 2100, Perdomo offered us the Latin American staple of beans and tortillas for dinner.

After eating, we talked:

SOF: How do you deal with guerrilla supply lines coming through Honduras?

PERDOMO: We have had a few successful ambushes. At this moment, the guerrillas are spread out and have not reunited. They are unorganized and hungry.

SOF: How long will you occupy this hill?

PERDOMO: We may be here another few days. We'll be replaced by another battalion, and we'll move to another position. But, we have to be very careful, more careful than we have been in the past, to avoid overextending ourselves. This position *must* remain fortified.

SOF: Are there many civilians in this area?

PERDOMO: There were 20,000 right around here; now there are only a few hundred. The people moved up into the high country to get away from the guerrillas.

Because of the many civilians working around here, however, we don't register the area for mortars, and we don't use mines.

SMITH: This war could be compared to Vietnam, but without the mines.

SOF: What do you think of the Guatemalans?

PERDOMO: Their army is good. Their soldiers have initiative and more experience as a group. The El Salvadoran soldier has less experience and tradition. But we are learning. We are fighting a very large guerrilla force. Guatemala may have bigger problems in the future, especially with the growing subversive movement in Mexico. The Mexicans, they are the leftist motherfuckers. The Guatemalans are good soldiers. But we are more people, a larger army, and we're more aggressive. The Aztec is our heritage — very warlike. My men like to eat hot food before combat to piss themselves off.

SOF: What are the guerrillas armed with?

PERDOMO: They have machine guns and RPG-2 rockets. And they have LAWs, which is something we don't have.

SOF: How are your men transported?

PERDOMO: We go everywhere on foot. But we have strong legs. My men are very skinny, if you haven't noticed. They have to be to climb these hills.

At 2100, Perdomo's men gathered around the fire. No one uttered a sound as the captain gave his briefing. Before rack time, the perimeter let loose with a "mad minute," in which the entire company opened up with everything in all directions as a security measure.

Wrapped in poncho liners, we drifted off to sleep. Despite this tropical climate, the night turned cold.

At 0300 we awoke to see the patrol off. Perdomo's eyes blazed as he stared ahead into the darkness. Sixteen men lined up behind him and they trudged off into the night.

Smith, Kowalski and I went back to our poncho liners, heard a few stray rounds pop off somewhere around the perimeter,

Capt. Perdomo (kneeling, center) briefs his men before 0300 assault. Guerrilla concentration, armed with RPG-2s and machine guns, was spotted hours earlier. Of 17 men who left on patrol, 12 came back after killing 60 guerrillas.

Belloso Battalion "Tiger" maintains perimeter defense near village of Perquin with .50-cal. Browning M2 Heavy Barrel MG.

and got a few more hours of sleep.

By 0900, we were back with Capt. Reyes at Perquin. The radioman at Maj. Corado's headquarters told us that the patrol was still moving, which meant they must have run into some problems as they were supposed to attack at first light.

Reyes had a "surprise" for us: a captured guerrilla. We were allowed to see him and to ask him a couple of questions. He was being held in an empty house, loosely tied to a chair with parachute cord. He appeared to be well-fed and in generally good spirits. He told us he had been with the guerrillas for one and a half years, until he was captured near Perquin. He had been

trained by a cadre of Nicaraguans, who had since been killed. But he received no weapons training until about three months ago, when they taught him to shoot a rifle.

He revealed to us that he had let himself be captured, claiming he deserted because he was mistreated by the guerrillas. He had lived near a guerrilla concentration, and when they organized his entire town into a guerrilla camp, he was pressed into service. "The guerrillas took charge of everyone in my village," he said. "That's how I came to be with them."

When I asked him if he had received any political training, he answered, "We were taught to change the system of government. We were told that our life would be changed and become better."

I asked him what life was like before the guerrillas came:

"Before, it was a peaceful life here. You could work, sleep, eat and raise a family in peace. Then it all changed. I wanted to get out of the guerrillas' hold. So did a lot of the others. A lot of us felt like slaves."

When I asked him what he wanted to do now, he said, "I would like to get back with my family and resume a normal life."

Our interpreter then asked that we end the questioning, as the prisoner was a valuable source of information and security could be compromised by allowing him to talk to outsiders. Unfortunately for this former guerrilla, he will be turned over to the National Police and will go to jail for a few years. "He *will* be punished," said Reyes. "After he pays his debt, he will be free."

It was time to move on. We walked around the village and observed the tight defensive perimeter where field discipline was excellent. The guerrillas had ransacked the local school and painted communist slogans on the walls, plus causing a lot of random, pointless destruction. In the clinic, the army doctor told us that he had treated up to 225 people in one day as civilians began returning to their town.

"We would like to develop more educational and medical programs for the people," said Reyes. "But we haven't the money. The Red Cross is supposed to be neutral, but they are not here where we could use them. We have gone into areas and found evidence of the Red Cross helping the guerrillas logistically, by transporting soldiers and munitions."

We saw a town destroyed by guerrillas — clinics, schools, civic buildings and churches. The army is trying to rebuild what the guerrillas have wrecked.

The villagers of Perquin were puzzled to see gringos here, but welcomed us. They had just returned to their homes and their work, and they seemed pleased to be back. A truck pulled up in the street, and an Indian woman began selling tortillas, rice and beans — but not to the soldiers. They would not accept any money from them — the soldiers got them on the house as a gesture of gratitude. I wondered how the tooth-fairy liberals back home would explain this away.

Right before our chopper arrived to take us back to San Francisco de Gotera, we heard the news: Perdomo's patrol had made contact. The captain and his 16 men had engaged the guerrillas, and killed 60 of the enemy. Unfortunately, they lost five of their own — the first fatalities for Perdomo's "Tigers." Perdomo himself took a bullet in the stomach, but I learned later that he is now recovering in a San Salvador hospital.

As I heard the news, I remembered our last brief discussion. Before he left on patrol, Perdomo had asked me to hand him my notebook, in which he wrote the following words:

"*Con la patria y con Dios, juntos pueblo y fuerza armada.*" (The people and the armed forces joined together for God and country.)

This belief seemed to be the driving force behind Perdomo, his men and the El Salvadoran people. And I believe that our readers will share with me the hope that their goals are realized, and that Capt. Perdomo recovers to lead his "Tigers" into battle another day.

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FALKLANDS WAR

Continued from page 37

All of this was done in the face of appalling weather, which gave British helicopters an advantage over Argentine guns and SAMs. The Falklands War proved one cannot discount the versatility and importance of helicopters in any task or under any conditions.

The Royal Artillery brought five batteries of its 105mm light guns to the Falklands, a total of 30 tubes. They outgunned the 22 Argentine 105mm howitzers, mainly light L5 pack guns, and outranged all but the four 155mms. The success in the battle for the hills outside Port Stanley was largely due to well-planned British artillery fire. They began the battle with more than 400 rounds per gun; many finished with less than 10.

Even though the British had left much of their sophisticated target-acquisition equipment, radars and night-vision equipment back in England or at San Carlos Bay, their fire-control systems were so effective that Argentine counter-battery fire never really came close. Meanwhile, the Argentine guns were reduced to hiding in backyards of houses occupied by British civilians to avoid detection and destruction.

Amphibious and helicopter mobility

was critical to British artillery effectiveness; *Bravo November* lifted three 105s and their crews at a time. British military officials said they were glad they sent 105mm weapons rather than heavier guns for this reason and since it allowed them to supply more shells than would have been possible with heavier ordnance. The British reported they could also put 105mm shells on Argentine positions when they were in contact with British troops with much greater confidence than with 155mm shells which have a larger fragmentation radius. The British 4.5-inch naval gun proved extremely valuable in the shore-bombardment mission.

The Falklands War was not fought with *Star Wars* technology. Yet it clearly showed some capabilities and limitations of modern precision weaponry. Within days of the destruction of the destroyer HMS *Sheffield* by an Exocet air-to-surface missile launched by an Argentine Navy Super Etendard fighter-bomber, substantial changes in sea war were predicted. Yet overall, the Exocet must be judged one of the war's failures. The Argentines fired a total of six, possibly seven. Four or five of these were from Etendards, one or two from improvised ground launchers (those that weren't sabotaged by the SAS).

Only three hit their intended targets. The remainder either missed or were decoyed off target by countermeasures. Of the three that hit, only one, which hit *Atlantic Conveyor*, actually exploded. The other two were duds, their only damage done by burning fuel and shock impact. The irony of this "success" story comes from the fact that the Exocet that hit *Atlantic Conveyor* was decoyed away from another ship and homed in by simple mischance.

The Exocet gained its successes, such as they were, largely because it has active radar guidance that uses monopulse ranging, an electronic counter-countermeasures approach that involves transmitting only very brief pulses of radiation. Because the Soviet Navy does not use monopulse radars on its anti-ship missiles, and because the British designed their ships to fight the Soviets, they were not going to pay, in peacetime, for a jammer to work against a missile that they never expected would be used against them.

One seldom has the luxury of knowing whom one's opponents will be. (The same thing happened when the U.S. Navy sent carrier task forces to the Indian Ocean during the hostage crisis in Iran. The Navy aircrews found, to their dismay, that they would be up against the latest U.S.-made Improved HAWK SAMs, while their countermeasures and warning equipment were designed to deal with Soviet SAMs and would thus be ineffective against the Iranians.)

The U.S.-made Shrike is an anti-radi-

ation missile. It homes in on the radio energy from an operating radar. Used extensively over North Vietnam, these missiles took out many early warning and SAM site radars — plus the light cruiser USS *Worden* when it accidentally got in the way.

The British got a rush shipment of Shrikes from the United States during the war and mounted them on Vulcan bombers. They destroyed the *Fledermaus* fire-control radar of one Argentine anti-aircraft battery and reportedly knocked out one of the two TPS-43 early-warning radars that the Argentines had deployed on the islands. Other Shrike-armed Vulcans patrolled the sea against Argentine warships.

Fortunately for the British, most of the weapon failures of the war belonged to Argentina. The French-built Mirages, Israeli-built Neshers and the U.S.-built A-4 Skyhawks that made up the bulk of the Argentine striking force were all good aircraft, used by air forces around the world. Their aircrews did not lack courage, but they did lack drop tanks, air-to-air refueling equipment, effective air-to-air missiles, electronic countermeasure equipment and much more. Their pilots' training also appeared to be inadequate. Apparently, the Argentines only fired two air-to-air missiles during the war, and they both missed.

But the biggest Argentine failure was their bombs. Half of the bombs that hit British ships failed to explode. This was largely due to the fact that Argentine aircraft were forced by British defenses to fly so low that the bombs did not have time to arm when dropped. Argentina had a motley collection of French, British and American bombs, chiefly the standard 500-pound HE (high-explosive) Mk82 types with Type 904 fuses. The advanced age of many bombs further decreased their reliability.

The Argentine Air Force had the Pucara, a home-grown, twin-turboprop, ground-attack aircraft, which potentially could damage the British helicopter force. The Pucaras, however, suffered heavy ground and air losses; the Argentines lost 15 Pucaras, while shooting down only one British helicopter.

Argentina went to war with some excellent U.S.-made night-vision equipment that the British Army had coveted but could not afford. However, the Argentines made no effort to move or fight at night, surrendering the initiative to the British — who have since put the captured night-vision equipment to use in Ulster and elsewhere.

Like the Soviets in Afghanistan, the Argentines used helicopter-delivered surface-scattered anti-personnel mines to cut down enemy night movement. The mines caused a number of casualties, but were not an important factor in the war. They did kill a substantial number of Falkland Islands sheep.

Other weapons did not work as well as they might have, such as British naval

electronics or the Vulcan bombers, but the failures resulted from the way the weapons were used, rather than inherent limitations in the weapons themselves.

The Falklands War was, perhaps more than anything else in the weaponry field, a triumph of improvisation. In a war that no one anticipated, many weapons were pressed into roles for which they were never intended. Throughout military history the ability to improvise — in strategy, tactics or weaponry — has been crucial to victory. There are few better examples of improvisation than the British effort in the Falklands.

The M72 66mm LAW (Light Antitank Weapon) is neither the most-loved nor most-effective weapon in the U.S. arsenal. Yet, despite the fact that Argentine armor took no part in the fighting, the British — who use the LAW as a standard ammunition round, as does the U.S. Army — found it quite effective. Although allied forces in Vietnam frequently suffered from unreliability in their LAWs, the British reported no such problems even in the cold, wet climate of the Falklands.

The British used LAWs against Argentine strongpoints and even against snipers. The most dramatic British use of the LAW, however, came in the "Battle of Top Malo House." In a move to counter Special Air Service teams, the Argentines sent in a patrol of their 601 Commando Company.

According to British military person-

nel, the 16 Argentines arrived by way of helicopter, watched by the Royal Marine Mountain and Arctic Warfare Training Cadre Force. When Argentines moved into the Top Malo house, they neglected to fortify it or to post sentries. The Marines used a LAW round through the window to open the night's festivities, which did not last long and ended with 13 survivors finally meeting the Marines.

Another incident showing that anti-tank weapons are effective against targets other than tanks came on 2 April when the Royal Marine detachment defending South Georgia severely damaged an attacking Argentine frigate with their 84mm Carl Gustav recoilless rifle.

The anemic British defense budget of recent years, compounded by the lengthy supply line to the Falklands and the difficulty of getting the supplies from the ships in San Carlos Bay ("Bomb Alley" to those who were there) to the troops ashore, meant that the British frequently had to fight with insufficient supplies of ammunition.

In one action, the Royal Marines improvised a way around a shortage of hand grenades. They cleared Argentines out of buildings by throwing in grenades which had their pins still in them, yelling "grenade!" for effect. The Argentines, not taking the time to closely examine the grenades, promptly went out the windows into the arms of the Marines, who then recovered the unused grenade for the next performance.

The British General Purpose Machine Gun, a 7.62mm weapon similar to the U.S. M60, was forced into service as an air-defense weapon for the fleet. Ships from the carrier *Hermes* down to landing craft sported improvised GPMG nests. The landing ships *Intrepid* and *Fearless* and the liner *Canberra* ("the great white whale of Bomb Alley," still in its cruising paint) reportedly bristled with GPMGs. The sheer weight of fire from these guns helped deter Argentine air attacks and reportedly accounted for several Mirage and Sky Hawk kills. The only drawback was that the troops, when they landed, took their GPMGs with them.

H.M.S. *Fearless* filled this air-defense gap with another improvisation: the helilift of a captured twin 35mm anti-aircraft gun from Goose Green soon after it was taken. Other captured weapons were also used against their former owners. They included .50-caliber M2 Browning machine guns and sophisticated American Starlight Scope night-vision equipment.

Poor maintenance hindered the use of some captured weapons; one British paratrooper complained that a captured Argentine rifle was so dirty and rusty that it required two hours' cleaning before it was usable.

The greatest improvisation of all, however, was the use of merchant ships to support the Royal Navy. Without

these ships, the task force would not have been possible. Three container ships, *Atlantic Conveyor, Atlantic Causeway* and *Contender Bezant*, became instant aircraft carriers, capable of fielding Harriers and helicopters. All the other merchant ships supporting the task force quickly received needed naval equipment, such as radios, helicopter pads, replenishment-at-sea fittings and jackstays within days of entering British shipyards. Any doubt that a strong merchant navy is needed for national security was put to rest by their remarkable showing in the Falklands.

The impressive list of British improvisations goes on. The paratroopers used MILAN anti-tank guided missiles to knock out machine guns at Darwin. The navy put quickly-made jammers into Lynx anti-submarine helicopters to guard against anti-ship missiles and pulled the *Search Water* radar out of a Nimrod Airborne Early Warning Aircraft and installed it in two Sea King helicopters; this adaptation was completed, however, too late to see action.

The air force rigged its Vulcan bombers to carry Shrike anti-radiation missiles and updated its electronic-warfare equipment with systems pulled out of bombers stationed in Germany. The priorities of combat allowed British military commanders to circumvent slow bureaucratic procedures and make expedient experiments.

The Argentines also produced a few

useful improvisations. They turned C-130 Hercules transports into long-range bombers, and although they did not do much damage — one British tanker was hit with a dud bomb, one Liberian tanker bombed and later sunk — it was an interesting idea. At Port Stanley airfield, the Argentines were able to mislead the British as to the effect of their airstrikes simply by painting bomb craters along the runway, with appropriate mounds of dirt alongside. Another Argentine use of the paintbrush was less original: They painted the red cross on their ammunition dumps.

The uniqueness of the Falklands War — it was different from any war fought in the immediate past or likely to be fought in the immediate future — does not diminish the applicability of the lessons learned. Although some military analysts contend that little new information was learned, since the war reinforced old wisdom, anyone concerned with the arms profession can ignore its lessons only at his or her peril.

Anyone who judges a military power by the quantity of its weapons is being willfully ignorant. The Argentines had, by and large, weapons comparable to the British. Yet, on the battlefield, they were repeatedly dislodged from well-fortified positions by numerically inferior British infantry.

Although Argentina had the weapons, its troops lacked everything else. They lacked tactics, whereas the British had refined their skill all over the world. They lacked training, whereas the British had trained constantly for fighting in conditions just as rigorous as the Falklands. They lacked physical fitness, in contrast to the Royal Marines who carried 120-pound packs across 50 frozen miles. Perhaps most importantly, they lacked cohesion and leadership.

As expected in an army oriented toward internal security, Argentine officers are basically political and not greatly concerned with conventional warfare. The British officer is not only highly trained and educated, but he does not ask his men to do anything that he would not do himself. Marine colonels humped 120-pound packs alongside their men; Lt. Col. "H." Jones led his lead platoon at the Battle of Goose Green and was killed attacking an Argentine machine-gun position.

In contrast, Argentine officers shot a few of their own men in the foot to encourage others, and then ran for the rear. Certainly, there were a number of competent Argentine officers, but the angry conscripts who roamed Port Stanley the day before and after the surrender didn't threaten to kill British, but rather the officers who had betrayed them.

Nor is heroism enough in modern war. The pilots of the Argentine Mirages, Neshers and Skyhawks won the respect of the British for their fearless, headlong attacks. Yet, while they sank several ships and killed many people, the

Argentine Air Force could not change the course of battle. Its aircraft were too short-ranged and they lacked all the extras — what is called "force multipliers" in the trade — of droptanks, tanker supports, air-sea rescue support and electronic-warfare equipment, as well as adequate tactics and training, which resulted in their high dud rate and their failure to shoot down any British planes. It is good to be respected by your enemy, but it is better to beat him.

The infantryman remains the ultimate weapon. All of the efforts of the British were devoted to putting infantry on the islands, and keeping them there until they physically removed the Argentines from what they had taken. The weapons of the British soldier — the 7.62mm SLR rifle, the 7.62mm GPMG, the 81mm mortar — all proved adequate to the tests of modern warfare even though the same Argentine systems failed because of poor maintenance and tactics — or just plain ignorance.

Even the simplest weapons were put to deadly use. The 1st Battalion, 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles, suffered no KIAs when they took Mount William because patrols had gone forward first to silently take out the Argentine observation posts by cutting the occupants' throats with the *kukri*, the traditional Gurkha fighting knife. To their right, on Tumbledown Mountain, one Scots Guard major, leading his company in a close assault, dispatched an Argentine with the bayonet. Those who allow fascination with modern high-technology weaponry — which proved to be important in the Falklands — to blind them to the basics are going to pay for ignoring the lesson of the Falklands.

Essentially, the battle for the Falklands shows that wars do not always follow the scenarios advanced during peacetime. Nor will the weapons you encounter be the ones you have been trained to oppose. In a world situation that is becoming more fractured and less stable each year, a military force must be ready for anything, not just those contingencies that planners consider most likely.

The Falklands War also shows that if the deterrence strategy is to apply to non-nuclear wars, then we must maintain the forces as well as the will and ability to respond to aggression. Argentina obviously thought the British had neither the forces nor the will to respond to its invasion. The Argentines must have assumed Britain would be as impotent as the United States had been during the Iran hostage crisis. They guessed wrong, a mistake that caused a stupid, preventable war that cost many lives.

Maybe the Falklands' most valuable lesson is that of a warning: Many of today's decision-makers are not bound by the rules of statecraft, diplomacy or common decency that we take for granted. The Soviet Union has successfully acted with impunity because it is a superpower. The Ayatollah's Iranian regime got away with its actions because no one stopped it. All the good will in the world and the diplomatic efforts of the British, American and Peruvian governments and the United Nations did not shift the Argentines from the Falklands. British infantry finally did that.

The weapons of the Falklands are thus instructive not only in tactics and technology, but in showing that there are times when such weapons must be used.

FREE AFGHANISTAN

BATTLES

Continued from page 47

Exploring one major tunnel complex between the Ho Bo Woods and the Filhol rubber plantation in late January, tunnel rats unearthed a valuable cache of VC intelligence documents.

Said one American officer, Richard Knowles, "This is by far the most important one yet."

The documents included detailed maps of the Saigon and Tan Son Nhut area, diagrams of U.S. billets in Saigon and blueprints for future terrorist raids. The documents proved that the tunnel rats had found Military Region IV headquarters, one of Cedar Falls' principal objectives.

"You've got to hand it to those little guys [the VC]," one engineer said. "They've been working on this one a long time. It's going to kill them when we blow it all up."

When Cedar Falls ended on 26 January, American commanders called it "an operation with a difference." Maj. Gen. William De Puy, one of the principal architects of American strategy in Vietnam, declared it "a decisive turning point in the III Corps area; a tremendous boost to the morale of the Vietnamese government and army; and a blow from which the VC in this area may never recover." In addition to the number of VC killed — 775 — the Army's seizure of VC headquarters and the destruction of so many of their tunnels and fortifications dealt the enemy a substantial logistical setback.

Transformation of the Triangle into a free fire zone, in which artillery and air strikes could be made without prior approval of the GVN or warning to its inhabitants, did not deter the VC from filtering back to reoccupy the jungle and rebuild their bases. Lt. Gen. (later Gen.) Bernard Rogers, Army historian for Cedar Falls, has written: "It was not long before there was evidence of the enemy's return. Only two days after the termination of Cedar Falls, I was checking out the Iron Triangle by helicopter and saw many persons who appeared to be Viet Cong riding bicycles or wandering around on foot."

As for Ben Suc, the razing of the village amounted to a blatant admission that the GVN was not up to pacification even in an area so close to Saigon. In effect, all the government of South Vietnam acquired from Ben Suc was a devastated forest and a horde of hostile refugees. An American colonel summed up Ben Suc with regret: "To tell you the truth, I don't think we can afford any more Ben Sucs."

Gen. Westmoreland's search-and-destroy strategy came to the Mekong Delta by 1967. Earlier in the war, Lt. Cmdr. Nguyen Thanh Chau of the

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South Vietnamese Navy and his boats' crews had been out in the Delta a hundred times, patrolling its maze of inland waterways ranging from man-made canals and irrigation ditches to flood-swollen rivers, creeks and tidal bayous.

The job of Chau and his 25th River Assault Group, a motley flotilla of junks, sampans and old French patrol boats equipped with heavy armor, cannons, machine guns and mortars could have been cause for despair. Chau's assault group was part of a navy force of 9,000 officers and men and 600 small vessels responsible for preventing some 82,000 VC from using the Mekong's 3,500 miles of waterway for transporting men and supplies and for raids on rural outposts and villages.

Despite formidable odds, Chau and his unit earned distinction in the dangerous game of disrupting VC water traffic and harassing their river bases. Chau, born in the Delta district, knew virtually every bridge, every bend in the waterways, every possible crossing point for VC guerrillas. His shrewd knowledge of the terrain and his tenacity in pursuing the VC paid off in enemy casualties. In 1965, while losing only two boats, five killed and eight wounded, Chau and his crew racked up hundreds of VC kills, 33 in one operation alone.

The effectiveness of Chau's Assault Group, however, was not typical of South Vietnamese naval operations in the Delta. Army dominance of the South Vietnamese General Staff left its sister service, the navy, a chronically poor relation. As a result, the Mekong's river assault force performed under a variety of handicaps: outdated vessels and inferior equipment, lack of funding, shoddy training and a shortage of personnel. Mediocre leadership, internal corruption and low status exacerbated the problem. Navy contingents, particularly in the Delta's high-risk environment, adopted a "stay-out-of-trouble" attitude toward the VC. Yet, overly cautious and unproficient navy patrols were bushwhacked and mauled by well-trained, highly motivated VC guerrillas.

The GVN evinced concern over increasing VC activity in the Delta, but had been resisting MACV's desire to engage U.S. forces there. With their wont for big sweeps and enormous firepower, large American units operating in the Delta, Saigon feared, could result in heavy civilian casualties and economic damage. Five million people, one-third of the country's population, crowded onto the Delta's arable land to a *density* of 200 per square kilometer. It was also South Vietnam's agricultural heartland and one of the world's most fertile rice bowls. Yet accepting the status quo in the Delta could have amounted to political as well as economic suicide.

The VC were taking a steadily larger "cut" of the Delta's rich rice crop. After hitting a high of four million metric tons in 1963, the amount of rice reaching

Saigon had declined in 1966 to three million, making expensive importation from the United States necessary. While the VC fed off Mekong rice, thousands in Saigon endured scarcity and higher prices. By the end of 1966, the GVN's fear of losing the Delta finally outweighed its reluctance. Americans were invited to the Delta war.

The accumulated effects of South Vietnamese neglect of the Delta combined with stepped-up VC guerrilla activity would not be easily rolled back by MACV. Against deteriorating resistance, the VC consolidated their hold on about one third of the Delta's population and threatened to expand it. In An Xuyen Province, government forces controlled less than four percent of the land. MACV also reported that 35 percent of all VC attacks on the GVN occurred in the Delta's IV Corps Tactical Zone. To a worried American staff, it looked as if the VC, unless countered quickly, were going to wrest the Delta from the GVN for good.

The tactical and logistical limitations peculiar to the Delta — a waterlogged terrain of waterways interlacing paddies and swamps, few roads and inadequate bridges — required a fresh approach to the use of American troops there. Outside the Delta, American ground forces had already experienced one Vietnam innovation, search and destroy by helicopter. Now, the combat units of the U.S. 9th Infantry Division, the first unit to be stationed permanently in the Delta, were in for another — search and destroy by boat.

MACV called this unusual marriage of Army and Navy the Mobile Riverine Force (MRF). While the Navy operated the riverine vessels, the Army was responsible for conducting on-shore combat operations. Riverine warfare was not entirely new to the American military. The Marines conducted riverine operations against the Seminole Indians in the Florida Everglades from 1837 to 1842, and the Navy along the Yangtze River in China from 1927 to 1932. The Army and Navy teamed up for riverine fighting along the Mississippi during the Civil War, and again in the Philippines as recently as World War II. But the vast size of the 26,000-square-mile Mekong Delta was a monumental test for MACV's riverine concept.

The riverine force MACV deployed in early 1967 incorporated two chief components of Westmoreland's search-and-destroy philosophy: troop mobility and superior firepower. Two of the 9th Infantry Division's three brigades would be based at permanent shore facilities at Ben Cat east of Saigon and in the vicinity of My Tho, the capital of Dinh Tuong Province. The river base constructed near My Tho was itself a logistical triumph. Army engineers, under occasional enemy fire, excavated flooded rice paddies as a basin for river craft, while hydraulic dredges sucked up sand from

the river bottom to form 640 acres of dry fill for the base site. Westmoreland personally selected the name for the base to symbolize American and South Vietnamese cooperation: "*Dong Tam*," which in Vietnamese means "unite hearts and minds."

The third brigade was housed offshore aboard U.S. Navy barracks ships and barges able to weigh anchor and move to other locations. To support riverine units aboard the floating base there was a squadron of repair, salvage and supply ships. The tactical element of the mobile flotilla, the river assault squadron, included a variety of craft: troop carriers, command vessels, gunboats and refuelers. The offensive flotilla was to be preceded by minesweepers and escorted by armored boats, called monitors (which resembled the Civil War craft of the same name), that packed 81mm mortars, 20mm cannons and M79 grenade launchers. Artillery barges, helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft were available for fire support and air reconnaissance.

The riverine force proved its worth in the Delta's intensifying guerrilla war. Previously inviolate VC bases, in the Plain of Reeds, the Rung Sat Special Zone (a huge swamp) and the Cau Mau Peninsula, unapproachable by land, were now within striking distance of aggressive and mobile riverine units. Hefty American river patrols also provided security for commercial traffic, reduced VC access to population centers and food-producing areas, and interrupted critical VC communications and supply routes. But even such a significant dent in VC activity did not break the guerrillas' grip on the countryside. Once more, as in Quang Tri and the Iron Triangle, search and destroy faced a flexible enemy, ready to evade, mass for large attacks, or revert to raiding and ambush.

Operation Coronado V, launched 15 September 1967, demonstrated search and destroy "riverine style."

Following reports that the VC 514th Local Force Battalion was in the Cam Son area of Dinh Tuong Province, the riverine command devised a plan to trap the enemy and destroy his fortifications there. Col. Bert David, in command of Coronado V, intended to crush the 514th between riverine forces landing on the Rach Ba Rai River in Central Cam Son and the 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry, moving overland from the northeast. So that the riverine force could reach the landing zones at beaches White One and Two without alerting the enemy, Col. David ordered preparatory and reconnaissance fire withheld until the riverine assault craft could pass a wide curve in the Rach Ba Rai known as "Snoopy's Nose."

On D-Day, at 0715, Lt. Col. Mercer Doty's 3rd Bn., 60th Infantry, aboard the riverine flotilla, made its way swiftly up the Rach Ba Rai. Within minutes it was past Snoopy's Nose, seemingly undetected. At 0730, however, as the land-

ing craft approached White Two, the VC, from point-blank range on both sides of the river, unleashed rocket, automatic-weapons and small-arms fire. With the heaviest fire coming from the east bank, the assault boats trained their cannons and machine guns in that direction. In the smoke and confusion, one boat, forging ahead of the minesweepers, proceeded through a vicious crossfire to land at White Two.

Col. Doty, observing from his command helicopter the combined mobility of the assault craft and the one successful landing, wanted "full speed ahead." But just before 0800 Doty's Navy counterpart, Lt. Cmdr. "Dusty" Rhodes, aboard one of the support crafts for Doty's unit, ordered all boats to turn back and reassemble downriver at beaches Red One and Two. His order was prompted by numerous casualties among boat crews and damage to minesweepers. Doty, the senior officer, eventually got word to Rhodes to reverse course and "send in the troops."

While the 5th Battalion swept overland toward White One from the northeast, Doty's battalion once more ventured upriver, again running a blazing gauntlet of VC recoilless rifles, grenades and machine guns. This time, despite the volume of fire, the convoy reached White One and Two. Casualties ran high, Company A reporting 18 wounded in one platoon.

Once ashore, the 3rd attacked in a southeasterly direction against tough enemy resistance, making contact with the 5th by early afternoon. To complete the encirclement of the VC 514th, another battalion pushed north from Red One and Two, while the 2nd Battalion, 60th Infantry was lifted in by helicopter to take a blocking position on the southeastern rim of the circle.

By nightfall, Doty's battalion, unable to overcome VC resistance, dropped back to improve its defensive position. Riverine craft covered the enemy's escape route westward across the river, assisted by an ARVN battalion on the west bank. Although air and artillery illumination was maintained over likely enemy concentrations, it was a relatively uneventful night for the American battalions camped in the slime and mud of Cam Son. Except for a brief flurry of fire between 0200 and 0400, all was quiet by dawn and no more VC were sighted. The sweep continued throughout the day, meeting only token resistance. Many of the VC had slipped away during the night. Coronado V was over.

Coronado V was one of the sharpest actions yet for the riverine force, a relatively new factor in the Vietnam War. After two days of action, the VC lost 213 killed. The Americans and South Vietnamese had casualties of 16 killed and 146 wounded. The disturbing number of crewmen on the assault ships wounded by the VC's B-40 and B-50 rockets emphasized the need for more protective armor — and was an omen of things to come.

In future operations, one of every three crewmen on the assault boats would be wounded at least once.

During its "baptism by fire" in 1967, the Navy, like the Marines in Operation Hastings and the Army in Cedar Falls, was drawn into the battle against an elusive enemy, in this case, the Viet Cong main-force units and guerrillas fighting in the watery terrain of the Mekong Delta. The Navy's joint participation with the Army in the unique Mobile Riverine Force came to symbolize both the Navy's substantial role in the war effort and the pressing need for the American military to adapt its resources and tactics to the "diverse battlefields" of South Vietnam.

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BENELLI

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With the magazine loaded and the bolt closed on an empty chamber, slap the button sharply forward and outboard with the thumb of the right hand. This will momentarily trip the cartridge retaining lever and a round will pop out of the magazine onto the lifter. Then retract the bolt and let it move forward, chambering the round.

It works. Maybe not as fast as simply jacking the retracting handle on the Remington 1100, but damn close. And it effectively counters the only major objection to the Benelli's use by U.S. law enforcement agencies. Eventually, all Benellis imported into the States will feature this device as standard-issue. Until then you must make the retro-fit yourself.

The Model 121 M1 Military/Police Benelli is finished for serious social purposes, not for display in a gun cabinet. The lower receiver, fore-end cap and trigger guard are fabricated from black anodized aluminum alloy. The lower receiver is black-enameled. After it starts to chip, paint stripper will remove the remainder, leaving only the matte-black anodizing. The beechwood handguard and buttstock have been walnut-stained to look about as elegant as a bookshelf made from pine orange crates.

But the modified-beavertail forearm and pistol-grip buttstock show thoughtful human engineering. The thin, checkered buttplate is black plastic. The barrel, magazine tube, upper receiver and all other steel parts have been phosphate-finished (Parkerized).

The 20-inch barrel is choked cylinder bore, which means no constriction at the muzzle end whatsoever. The bore and chamber are chrome-plated. The magazine holds seven shells. Barrel and magazine are held together at the muzzle end by a detachable clamp intended to provide support for the long, extended magazine tube.

After it has been removed during disassembly several times, the retaining screw will strip the threads of the sheet-metal clamp. Just pitch it in a ditch and order one of Garth Choate's (Choate Machine and Tool Co., Inc., Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 218, Bald Knob, AR 72010) sling swivel base-clamp kits for $5. It not only solves this minor irritation but comes with a set of heavy-duty non-detachable 1.25-inch swivels to replace the puny .75-inch European-type swivels the Benelli already has. While you're at it, Choate's butt swivel can be mounted on top of the buttstock, if you prefer the increasingly popular submachine-gun-style carry for the scattergun.

The common push-button safety is located in the usual place, at the rear of the trigger guard, but it offers small purchase for the fingers.

The front sight is a hefty Patridge type,

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silver-soldered to the barrel. Peculiar and offensive-looking at first glance, the rear sight is really quite effective. Its strange, interrupted-half-moon shape is snag-proof and significantly speeds sight alignment and target acquisition.

With no gas system and only eight components in the bolt unit, cleaning the Benelli is simplicity itself. To disassemble unscrew the fore-end cap and remove the handguard. Pull the barrel group forward and away from the lower receiver and magazine. Tug the bolt assembly back as far as it will go and lift out the firing pin stop. The firing pin and spring can now be freely withdrawn. Lift out the retracting handle and pull the entire breech block out the rear of the upper receiver. Take out the bolt's locking bar and separate the bolt head and accumulator spring from the bolt body.

To reassemble just repeat the above in the reverse order. The trigger group can be removed by drifting out its retaining roll-pin. I do not advise this since the trigger mechanism is sufficiently exposed for cleaning and roll-pins are usually difficult to remove without breakage.

The Model 121 M1 weighs seven pounds, three ounces. Felt recoil is moderate. Those accustomed to gas-operated guns, such as the Remington 1100, may find it to be severe. Those used to firing barrel-recoiling shotguns like the Remington Model 11 or Browning A-5 will consider felt recoil to be mild.

No other shotgun comes close to the Benelli in speed of mechanical action. I have watched John Satterwhite (see "SOF Interviews Shotgun Wizard," SOF, September '81) fire this gun at cyclic rates approaching that of the M3 submachine gun (450 rpm). Recovery time between shots is equally rapid and multiple targets can be engaged with ease at ranges out to 75 yards.

Accuracy with the buckshot and rifled slug loads, for which cylinder bore is intended, is excellent. However, the accuracy potential of both factory-loaded and cast slugs from Lyman molds of recent vintage is not what it was several decades ago. Stung by industry-wide product-liability litigation, manufacturers have reduced slug diameters, without notice, for fear they might be fired through full-choke barrels.

Arguments still rage between proponents of Nos. 00, 0, 1 and 4 buckshot (9, 12, 16 and 27 pellets, respectively, in 2.75-inch shells). There are convincing arguments for the use of each, but the U.S. military forces have generally stayed with No. 00. For indoor defensive purposes, I prefer the BB-size pellets. All buckshot sizes can penetrate two or more layers of sheet rock and result in injury to the very family members you are attempting to protect.

I've fired several thousand rounds through my Benelli and have experienced no failures of any kind with good quality factory and reloaded ammunition. The Model 121 M1 should come very close to passing the most rigid military specifications for reliability.

Shotguns reached their first prominence in the U.S. military during WWI. Gen. John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, had experience with the Winchester Model 1897 shotgun on the Mexican border just before the war. He anticipated its application to trench warfare and almost 30,000 shotguns were obtained for American use in France. The official trench gun, Model 1917, was a 12-gauge Winchester Model 1897 riot gun with a 20-inch cylinder bore barrel equipped with the Springfield Armory-designed ventilated-sleeve bayonet adapter.

It should be made clear that Article 23 of the annex to the Hague Convention No. IV of 18 October 1907 most certainly does not prohibit the use of shotguns or shotgun ammunition in warfare.

During WWII, the U.S. Marine Corps made extensive and effective use of shotguns in the jungle campaigns of the Pacific islands. The terrain and tactics peculiar to the European and North African campaigns de-emphasized the shotgun's role and there were few instances of their use in these theaters.

After WWII, the British brought the shotgun to its zenith in the fierce jungle fighting of the war in Malaya. Detailed studies conducted during this conflict indicated that out to 75 yards, shotgun hit probability was superior to that of all other small arms. The studies further demonstrated that, although at that time less reliable, the autoloading shotgun produced more hits during brief engagements than slide-action guns by virtue of its higher rate of fire.

Both the U.S. Army and Marine Corps fought with shotguns under all tactical environments during the Vietnam War. Wherever used consistently, higher body counts were reported. The chances of a point man's survival were usually enhanced when he could respond to enemy targets with the dense pattern of projectiles the shotgun offered.

In an effort to define the shotgun's future role with the U.S. military services, a Mission Essential Need Statement has been formulated and assigned to the small-arms engineering team at the Naval Weapons Support Center as the JSSAP (Joint Services Small Arms Program) Multipurpose Individual Weapon (MPIW) program. Burst-fire weapons functioning with box or drum magazines are under evaluation.

Heckler & Koch itself is committed to its own combat-shotgun program and a prototype externally resembling their G11 caseless cartridge weapon (see "SOF Reports on H&K Caseless Gun," SOF, March '82) has recently been displayed.

But the Benelli Model 121 M1 is with us, here and now. Until reliable weapons designed from the ground up as combat shotguns become a reality and can pass rigorous military test procedures (a prospect still years in the future), the Benelli is the very best fighting shotgun available. It merits your close examination.

GARAND

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Bob Riordan joined in time to make the Guam and Okinawa landings, and then became something of "an old China hand," finishing up the war with part of the First Marine Division at Peking. The M1, according to Riordan, "is a beautiful weapon, but too slow; the Corps shouldn't go back to it."

Was he having a good time? "God, yes, I wouldn't have missed this for the world. The camaraderie we have as Marines you'll get nowhere else. . . . It's just like reliving your youth. . . no matter what, we're all Marines."

A new relay took position and I got as close to the firing line as my ears — well-stuffed with lamb's wool — would permit. I wanted to see how last year's champ, Bill Johns, was doing. He was shooting well, but would miss the top spot this year and come in second overall.

Johns has his own M1, a beautifully maintained weapon, and when asked to what he attributes his marksmanship, he says with a grin, "Concentration and the will to win." Though Johns and the Garand go back a long way, he doesn't consider it a mistake to give up the rifle as the principal infantry weapon. "These things will reach out and kill at a thousand yards. As long as you're going to do close-in shooting, like that done in 'Nam, there's no need for such accuracy. There's little likelihood of combat, nowadays, at a thousand yards or better." When I suggested the possibility of our fighting in the desert again at some time in the future, he agreed the M1 would be the weapon to carry.

As we were talking, a Navy corpsman came by and with a sly grin stuck a pen in my bush-jacket pocket. I didn't have to pull it out to see the inscription; he was wearing it on his back:

"The Marines *have* a few good men — Navy corpsmen."

HM1 Wayne Moon, one of the docs with the H&HC of the Folsom Reserve Marines, was looking forward to getting behind a rifle.

"Damn right I'm shooting today, and I and any other Navy corpsmen here today will be the only non-Marines allowed the privilege. The 'message' on my skivvy shirt is only a joke: I love being with the Marines — they take good care of me, and I take good care of them, and that's the way it's been for five years"

The oldest Marine aboard that weekend was Bob Moore, 71, of Altoona, Pa. Bob enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1934, served his hitch, and came back again for the tail end of WWII. "The M1 is a good rifle," he said, "but I'd rather have the '03. Now there was an accurate piece." Moore fired a score of 71, outshooting 28 younger Marines.

By now the sun was well over the yardarm and it was heating up under the fall sun

on this little ridge at Indiantown Gap. People began shedding utility jackets, and the smell of boiling coffee wafted across from the mess area in back of the line.

Time for noon chow.

Lunch in the field was warmed-over C-rats, washed down with Kool-Aid and finished off with strong coffee. While lunching alfresco, I had a chance to talk with Jim Tubel, of Wexford, Pa. Tubel and his grown son had flown into the landing strip at Indiantown Gap in their restored Navy SN-J, the WWII training plane which logged so many hours at places like Whiting Field.

This is the aircraft with the big greenhouse and Pratt and Whitney engine which never says die. Tubel's horizon-blue SN-J bore the markings of the famous "Ace of Spades" squadron. Former Marine pilot Tubel mentioned that he had picked it up from a Canadian who'd owned the SN-J for 22 years. "We've got all the paper on it," he said with a grin, "even going back to the day it came right out of the box. As a matter of fact, the pilot who delivered the plane to Pensacola made the log notation, 'bad brakes, bad hydraulics,' and we've been working on that."

After chow the Marines who had been manning the butts were ready to take their turn on the firing line. A couple of them were talking about their morning pulling targets. "It's funny how Hollywood has it all wrong," said one Marine. "I had forgotten the sound of dozens of rounds going by just a few feet overhead. The noise is like the firing line is only 10 or so feet away rather than 300 yards downrange. You can't hear yourself think."

And so it went, relay after relay cranking them off under the warm fall sun throughout the weekend, until everybody, even "the cooks, bakers and truck-drivers," had had a chance on the line. Top shooter was Dick Shaffer, with a score of 181 and seven Vs. Last year's champ, Bill Johns, came in next at 175 and four Vs. Team A of the Coal Crackers Marine Corps League Detachment ended up with the best aggregate score.

The Pennsylvania All-Marine shootout is a rifle match, a reunion and a hell of a good time. But it's more: a reaffirmation on the part of those there to a commitment made to Corps and country, perhaps decades ago, but a commitment nevertheless.

Near the end of the day I was talking with John Sott of Pittsburgh, a WWII Second Division Marine. The Second Marine Division was in the thick of it from start to finish, in some of the hairiest beach assaults of the Pacific War, and Sott had come aboard in '42.

He'd made a good many of those landings, and when I asked him which had been the worst, the smile dropped from his face and a shadow rose in his eyes. The war had come back to him for a moment.

"Tarawa. . . Tarawa was the worst of the bunch." His voice fell away and then came back. "But it had to be done — and it was done." Semper Fidelis.

EDITORIAL

Continued from page 22

The refugees have lost family, country, culture — almost everything that they were. The veterans have lost their beliefs in many of these things, in addition to some good friends. Each of us, refugee and veteran, is unable to go home. We are waiting for political and moral changes that may never come. We co-exist on the fringes of a society that refuses to confront the war or its survivors. We are an ever-present reminder of a broken commitment and a nation's inability to defeat the obscenity of communism on its own ground.

Our mistake was never one of principle; it was that we did not know ourselves, the enemy or the culture in which we fought. The human wreckage strewn across the South China Sea is eloquent testimony to that.

Whether the Vietnam veteran and the refugee will remain together in the backwater of this society, I do not know, but I tell my students that I fought in Vietnam and that I lost friends there that were closer than my own brother. We can talk freely of the war, because for us there is no shame.

I had ended a class one day, after talking with the students about the area around Con Thien and of the Marines who had died there. As I started to leave, a former Vietnamese Army officer who had also fought in the area came to my desk.

"Teacher," he said, "I thank you for to come to my country." I do not think most Vietnam veterans will ever be so fortunate.

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COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

Continued from page 10

veloped a strong grip, and have had problems with hand and wrist strength and coordination conditioning. For shooters new to the P-7, I recommend daily hand exercises with a squeeze grip that can be purchased from sporting goods stores. Asking students to draw and fire one well-placed shot from five meters in 1.5 seconds with their P-7s has shown that many fail to depress the squeeze cocker correctly and therefore fail to fire the weapon. For those who only handle and fire their P-7 occasionally, the loss of grip manipulation can be critical. If you cannot practice regularly with your P-7, buy the grip exerciser and use it.

Few after-market accessories are needed with the P-7. Unlike the 1911 pistol, custom pistolsmithing is not necessary to make the out-of-the-box P-7 an optimum performer. The corners are nicely beveled and there are no sharp edges to cut into skin and clothing. And most important, the P-7 lies well in the hand with the bore close to the center line of the hand for excellent recoil control.

One cause of concern is the actual tactical application of the magazine release of the P-7. The butt-mounted release is indeed the fastest of the heel-mounted types. But although the Germans love butt-mounted releases, few serious students of pistolcraft find them charming. An H&K representative told me that the butt-mounted release was a requirement of the German police so that ambidextrous use would be possible. Obviously no one had shown the Germans that the 1911-pattern pistol magazine catch mounted to the left-rear of the trigger guard is also ambidextrous.

In my opinion, this butt-mounted catch is the P-7's one real shortcoming. Since the catch must be pressed forward to release the magazine, the chance of accidentally dropping the mag is also increased. I have frequently seen P-7 owners, wearing the gun on their strong-side hip, getting into or out of a vehicle and pushing the weapon against the car seat or door. In so doing, the mag catch is depressed and the magazine pops down out of its latched position.

If you wear the P-7 on the strong-side hip, check it often — *far too many peo*ple I know have had this problem. H&K would be wise to modify their P-7 design to allow for a 1911-style magazine catch. But, although the P-7 is an outstanding sidearm, the Germans are not famous for admitting that their small arms need modifications. But we can still hope — and while they're at it, why don't they make a P-7 pistol in .45 ACP? ☠

FLAK

Continued from page 6

There are valid reasons for "rules of engagement" and "weapons handling restrictions," but during the Vietnam era, the military went too far and overreacted to critics in Congress, the media and the public who attacked the military based on concern over possible civilian casualties. Although no one will ever know exactly how many, there were more than a few Americans who lost their lives in Vietnam as a result of stupid "rules of engagement." The powers, both civilian and military, worried more about what would happen to their careers if an innocent civilian was killed than what was happening to the troops in the field. Thus, today we have advisers in El Salvador who can't carry "offensive" weapons — an M16 is an "offensive" weapon, a pistol is "defensive" — and Marines walking patrols in Beirut without a magazine in the well. The problem of avoiding civilian casualties in a war, or in a peace-keeping role like Lebanon, is a valid one but the answer is not to put our troops under life-threatening strictures. Our troops are there, after all, in our interest and the primary concern of our government should be that their lives not be wasted foolishly.—The Eds.

SAFE AND SECURE...

Sirs:

I'm a military policeman in the U.S. Marine Corps. When I first started my duties as an MP back in January '81, we carried our Government .45s with a magazine in the magazine well, no round in the chamber, and an extra magazine in the magazine pouch. After several barrel-clearing accidental discharges, the Marine Corps decided to have no magazine in the magazine well and two magazines in the pouch. It seems there were still some ADs. So now we carry our .45s with the slide security wired, as well as no magazine in the weapon.

The wire is difficult to break by sliding the slide back and it also takes too much time — those few extra seconds possibly needed to save my life or that of someone else. I have personally broken the security twice by holstering my weapon. I have been informed that should I break the security wire once more, I can expect a fine or loss of a stripe through court martial.

I believe the solution to the problem of accidental discharges is not by limiting access to our rounds, but through proper

education and meticulous safety classes. I depend on my weapon, and hope that when I need to use it there won't be any interference.

What's next — welded slides, no rounds?

Name withheld at writer's request.

SOF DELIVERS...

Sirs:

As a Vietnam veteran (B Co., 2 Bn., 12th Cav., 1st Cav. Division), I believe I speak for thousands — no, tens of thousands — when I say thanks for all the help in all of the different areas that you've been involved in.

I live in a small farming community in Arkansas. When I *can* get a TV station, it fades in and out. So I look forward to receiving my SOF each month to be filled in on the global action. Although times are tough, we're saving our nickels and dimes for our next subscription to SOF.

James A. McHenry
Mena, Arkansas

DEATH OF A HERO...

Sirs:

I enjoy reading your articles, but noted an error in your December '82 issue. In Jim Graves and Bob Poos' article, "The Empire Strikes Back," it is stated that the SAS and SBS lost 20 men in accidents and none to enemy action, but this is incorrect.

Capt. John Hamilton, 29, of the SAS was KIA. He commanded the first SAS team into South Georgia and was also involved in the Falklands operations. On 10 June 1982, he and a signaler were occupying an observation post overlooking Port Howard on West Falkland. They were spotted by Argentine troops and surrounded. Capt. Hamilton ordered the signaler to escape while he held the position. He engaged the enemy and kept firing until he ran out of ammunition and was killed. Capt. Hamilton has been recommended for a posthumous Victoria Cross. I feel that this officer's bravery and devotion to duty should have been mentioned in the otherwise excellent article.

Alan J. Paulsen
San Antonio, Texas

At the time our article was written, the documents we had at hand did not list an SAS man killed by hostile fire. The problem with an "official secrets" act as strong as the one Britain has is that it makes errors such as the omission of Capt. Hamilton from the list of men KIA due to hostile fire almost certain. We regret the omission.—The Eds.

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in relative safety. Additionally, South Africa believes that Savimbi's troops could neutralize South West African People's Organization fighters in the north, a task that South Africa has been sharing with UNITA.

South Africa reportedly has shelved the plan temporarily because of lack of support from the international community, but is working behind the scenes to sell it.

SPECIAL FORCES CORRECTION...

Last month's Bulletin Board should have stated that the 11th and 12th Special Forces Groups were Reserve units, while the 19th and 20th are National Guard SFGs. Sorry for the transposition.

VIETNAM COMES CLEAN...

In a French television film aired 16 February, North Vietnam Generals Vo Nguyen Giap and Vo Bam have admitted that North Vietnam lied about two important assertions that helped precipitate the anti-war movement in the United States.

First, the decison by the North Vietnamese communist governing committee to attack the Saigon government in 1959 was made one year *before* the National Liberation Front was established in South Vietnam. This admission directly contradicts claims at the time that the Viet Cong was an autonomous force in the south that rose in opposition to the Diem regime. Gen. Bam headed the operation to open the infiltration route to the south, which began in 1959, two years before President Kennedy sent 685 American advisers to the Diem government.

The second admission concerned the theater of the war. The North Vietnamese have previously insisted that they never intervened in Laos or Cambodia, in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Now, 10 years after the war officially ended, these two illustrious NV generals admit that the Ho Chi Minh Trail did carry them into neighboring countries as well.

"It [Ho Chi Minh Trail] was not only for Vietnam but for the war theater of our brother peoples," they declared.

No one could accuse the Socialist French government or its televison in-

dustry of being pro-U.S. or militaristic in nature. The source should be above suspicion from even the most adamant anti-war activists.

COMING COUP IN COMOROS?...

The arrest of two Australians in Perth, Australia, under a little-used Foreign Incursions and Recruitment Law sparked rumors of a mercenary plot to overthrow the Comoros Islands government, reports *Africa Now* Magazine.

According to its report, Edward Arthur Greengrove and Frederick John George Patrick, both in their 30s, of Armadale, Western Australia, were charged with violation of a law which could net them 10 years in prison. Greengrove allegedly accepted $47,500 in West German currency from an unidentified person in Singapore between 6 and 10 December '82; Patrick reportedly received $2,766 in Perth from an unidentifed person in January '83. The money in both transactions, according to *Africa Now*, was to be used to overthrow the government of Pres. Ahmed Abdallah, who was upstaged in a 1975 coup by Ali Soilih. Abdallah regained his presidency as a result of a May '78 coup led by French mercenary Robert Denard.

Perth, unbeknownst to most of its 800,000 residents, is no newcomer to the coup business. *Africa Now* reports that it contains its own "self-styled mercenary community," many of whom are former British or Australian soldiers. Contributions for "Mad Mike" Hoare's unsuccessful Seychelles coup attempt allegedly came from the sizable group of Seychelles exiles who live there, about half of whom oppose its current government.

More details to come in future SOFs.

SOF CONVENTION REGISTRATION...

For those of you planning to attend SOF's Fourth Annual Convention in Las Vegas, 6-9 October '83, Sahara Hotel & Casino, you must pre-register before 25 September. This year it will not be possible to register at the convention, as has been the case the last three years. For more convention details, see page 24 of this issue.

AMIN'S UGANDAN LEGACY...

Uganda's economic recovery plan, which depends in large part upon the resumption of pre-Amin tourism levels, has hit a serious snag. It seems the wide availability of the AK-47 rifle during Amin's reign of instability led to the depletion of elephants in the Kabalega Falls National Park. Of a proud herd of 2,000 that used to roam there, fewer than two dozen survived Amin's army, particularly its high-ranking officers who organized a lucrative poaching business, which attracted thousands of free-lance poachers.

The Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife is trying to rehabilitate game reserves and end the poaching so that tourism might flourish once more, but greed is a hard problem to overcome. Ivory brings about $30 per pound in overseas markets and a large set of elephant tusks can net a poacher more than $6,000.

U.S. SPIES SOVIET SUBS...

Startling U.S. technological breakthroughs in underwater sound detection have made Soviet nuclear subs instantly detectable and trackable.

Using a massive worldwide network of underwater detecting devices, spy subs, snoop ships and spotter aircraft, the United States can constantly monitor the Soviets' 378 nuclear subs. And soon this tracking equipment will be standard on all NATO subs, helicopters and patrol ships of anti-submarine forces.

One NATO expert summed it up: "The Russians have a limited number of openings to the sea and we've got them all thoroughly staked out 24 hours a day, every day of the year ... they can no longer roam NATO waters at will."

PHILBY TUTORS ANDROPOV...

Soviet mole Harold Kim Philby, who fled to Moscow in the early '60s after years of spying on the British, helped former KGB Director and now Soviet Premier Yuri Andropov turn the KGB from a "collection of clumsy thugs" into a chillingly effective intelligence operation, according to Soviet agent-turned-defector Vladimir Sakharov writing in *Penthouse* Magazine.

Under Philby's tutelage, "KGB officers soon began to wear expensive Western-style clothes, display polished manners, appear extremely sophisticated. They began to resemble the cool, correct British intelligence agent in his Savile Row suit," Sakharov writes.

Sakharov also credits Philby with interesting Andropov in Western dress, music and drink.

MISSING PERSON SEARCH...

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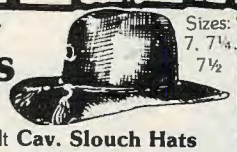

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